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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Multimodel Evaluation of Preventive Orientation Programs for Adults Entering a Distance University

BY

Rosalyn Delehanty

©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
Fall, 1986

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June 3, 1986

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Multimodel Evaluation of Preventive Orientation Programs for Adults Entering a Distance University" submitted by Rosalyn Delehanty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology.

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(External Examiner)

October 3, 1986

Dedication

For Brendan, Megan, and John

ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to determine whether counselling programs could be developed which would assist adult students entering a distance education university program.

Two preventive orientation programs were developed with each containing components designed to assist incoming students with information on the distance education system, with information through which self assessment could be made regarding the appropriateness of this system for them, and with a means of anticipating potential problems and problem solutions. One program, designed for home-study, consisted of a self-instructional booklet with an accompanying audio cassette. The other program was designed to be delivered as a group workshop.

Program effectiveness was assessed through application of an evaluation approach proposed by Michael Scriven. Comparisons were made between students participating in each of the programs and to a no-treatment comparison group.

The primary findings of the study were that both the programs (a) served a genuine need, (b) attracted a sizable market, (c) were assessed by expert judges as valid processes through which student needs could be met, (d) served different populations, (e) demonstrated beneficial long term effects through student self-report, counsellor assessment, and through course progress, (f) were cost-effective compared to individual counselling, and (g) were judged to have institutional support.

This study supports the need for early preventive intervention for adult students making a re-entry into formal education in distance university system. Both types of programs were well received. Analysis of comparative outcomes of each program was limited by a self-selection process which resulted in substantially different populations in each treatment group.

The evaluation results support the continuance and further development of the programs. Further research should be directed towards differential assessment of the effects of program components for specific subgroups of students.

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

A striking recent development in higher education has been termed the "greying of the campus." Demographic projections indicate that the number of students in the over 22 year age bracket will increase rapidly while the number of students in the under 18 year old age bracket will decrease. The absolute number of middle-aged people is expected to almost double during the period between 1975 and 2000 (Fenske, 1981). If current trends continue, the influx of adult students into institutions of higher education will create a substantial change in university population and in the clientele of university counselling services.

Attempts to satisfy the need of adults for increased educational opportunities has led to expansion in part-time programs within traditional university settings (Thomas, 1975) and to the creation of unconventional universities with open admission policies and with instructional delivery systems which do not require classroom attendance on campus. Distance instruction has risen at the university level primarily in response to the educational needs of this burgeoning adult population. The use of distance media (e.g., television, audio tapes, computer assisted instruction, home-study print material) is intended to increase access to formal education for people who cannot or choose not to attend classes on a campus.

Distance education was expected to be an alternative that "the majority of adults.....should find a natural and welcome environment for learning" (Moore, 1972, p. 87). This expectation is now being re-examined in light of high attrition rates apparently signaling some difficulties with the system. The removal of institutional barriers such as required presence on campus and prerequisites to admission has not been sufficient to insure as high a level of successful educational accomplishment by those participating in the non-traditional programs as was anticipated. Those recently established distance universities in the United States and Canada which report dropout rates for single courses indicate rates running as high as 60 percent (Bhatnager, 1975). Baath (1982) reports the University of Lund in Sweden has a 69 percent attrition rate while his survey of non-American distance universities revealed that an attrition rate of 50 percent or more was not unusual. Although a comparative analysis of attrition depends upon the definitions of attrition used, these figures are generally thought to reflect a higher rate than one might reasonably expect (Daniel & Marquis, 1979).

Concerns about attrition which arise at most distance universities were evident, as well, at Athabasca University, the setting for this study. Athabasca University, is an exclusively distance, English-speaking university that provides three university degree programs to a population of approximately 8,000 students. Its primary instructional mode is a home-study package of textbooks and self-instructional guidebooks. This material is typically augmented by weekly telephone contact with a tutor. Overall course attrition rates at Athabasca University were estimated as either 71 or 42 percent depending on whether students who show no evidence of starting their coursework were included or excluded. A majority of students within the more stringent 71 percent attrition definition showed no evidence of having started their course-work. These students, labeled "non-starts" were, consequently the primary focus of concern (Shale, 1982).

Efforts to find reasons for the difficulties students experience and to work toward reducing those difficulties that are resolvable are seen as crucial activities for distance universities. Athabasca University shared the assumption that the reasons for attrition should be clarified and, if possible, attrition reduced. Believing that it is wasteful for society to provide, and painful for a student to experience, a brief promise of an educational goal that is never fulfilled, Athabasca University was determined that its "open door" policy does not become a "revolving door" (R. Paul, personal communication, 1983). Intervention in this attrition process was seen as having a role in reducing the various ways in which society in general, and Athabasca University and its students in particular, lose.

In the case of Athabasca University there was reluctance to consider changing policies such as open admission which would very likely serve to increase completion rates but would, at the same time, decrease access to university education for many adults. There was, nevertheless, considerable concern that institutional policies and practices be carefully scrutinized to determine whether changes in student services or instructional practices could be made which would assist students in overcoming the difficulties they have in reaching their educational goals.

Purpose of the Study

For a counselling psychologist, a question raised by the problems underlying attrition was whether counselling interventions could be designed within a distance education context which would assist students in adapting to their new student roles and achieving their educational goals. The purpose of this study was the development and evaluation of two such programs. More specifically, two programs covering similar content were designed to address issues thought to be related to attrition and to address them at a time when intervention efforts would be utilized by this population. One program was designed for distance delivery to students in their homes. The second program was designed as a face-to-face workshop.

Program Development

The programs developed to address these problems were two orientation programs using a preventive educational counselling approach. Brief descriptions of the programs follow.

Program I: Distance program. The distance program consisted of a self-instructional guidebook and audio-cassette for use at home. The audio-cassette contained a discussion by Athabasca University students of their experiences as distance university students. It was designed to serve both as stimulus to self-assessment as well as a modeling tool. Exercises to assist in self-assessment and in making plans to overcome common obstacles encountered by students were included along with information on resources available. The estimated length of the time required to work through the materials was approximately two hours.

Program II: Group workshop program. This face-to-face program was a semi-structured half-day group workshop led by a counsellor. A video-tape (from which the audio-track for the home-study program was taken) was produced to serve as a stimulus to self-assessment of students' readiness to undertake a distance university program and as a modeling tool for the group workshop. Individual and group exercises were designed to assist in self-assessment and in making plans to overcome difficulties frequently encountered by students. Information on resources available was presented and students had an opportunity to ask questions, to make contact with other students as well as with the counsellor leading the workshop. The usual length of the workshop was four hours.

Each program, although focused on similar goals, was clearly different in that the group dynamics and personal contact established in group workshops were absent in the home-study program. Voluntary participation in the home-study program, however, may have involved a greater acceptance of the independence and isolation characteristics of the distance education program students were entering. Questions regarding student choice of program and the outcome of experiences in each program were consequently seen as relevant for both formative as well as summative evaluation.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation of these programs was aimed at providing information on the experience of students as they began their courses, at defining student needs that might be addressed in a counselling program, and determining the degree to which the specific programs developed were effective in meeting those needs and of reducing the likelihood of attrition. Doing such a task required choosing a model of evaluation and establishing its appropriateness for the context and program. Limitations inherent in developing a program within the setting given will become evident as program development and implementation are described. These real life limitations in development and implementation as well as the practical and social implications of the results of the program are critical factors for practitioners and administrators evaluating a particular program's effectiveness. It is the evaluation of such practical and social implications of a program combined with outcome measurement of program objectives that are the goals of a comprehensive evaluation process such as that advocated by Scriven (1974). Scriven's evaluation model incorporates traditional research design but goes beyond that perspective. The model includes consideration of a wide range of factors such as social values of the study, side (and possibly unintended) effects not only on the targeted participants but also on staff, administration and public, a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data on outcome effects from many sources, and an analysis of cost-effectiveness. It is argued that discussion of program merits and demerits within such a framework has practical value for counsellors and administrators working within the setting studied.

Summary

This study involved the development and evaluation of two preventive counselling intervention programs aimed at student retention within a distance university context. 'Discussion of program development as well as outcome results are done within the perspective of a comprehensive research evaluation model (Scriven, 1974).

In Chapter II, relevant literature is reviewed. Chapter III covers the rationale and procedures followed in development and implementation of the programs. Chapter IV is a description of the evaluation methodology. Chapter V is a report of the evaluation results. Chapter VI contains a discussion of the results and recommendations for program changes and further study.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes a review of relevant literature on (1) evaluation research, (2) distance education, (3) student counselling in distance universities, and (4) preventive counselling models.

Since the literature in each of these subject areas is extensive and overlaps with many related subjects, each topic will be dealt with, not exhaustively, but with sufficient comprehensiveness to highlight the issues involved in program planning and in program evaluation for the population and circumstances involved.

Evaluation Research

This section includes discussion of (1) the definition and history of evaluation, (2) evaluation models, with particular emphasis on the model proposed by Scriven, and (3) the convergence of evaluation methodologies and counselling research.

Definition and History

Evaluation as a formal systematic method of inquiry has been defined in many ways and "endlessly categorized, (with) chapels....dedicated to the glorification of particular styles" (Cronbach, 1980, p. 1). Evaluation has been variously defined as "systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent on a contemporary program" (Cronbach, 1980, p. 14), "the collection and use of information to make decisions about a program" (Worthen & Sanders, 1973, p. 44), "a set of procedures to appraise a program's merit and to provide information about its goals, expectations, activities, outcomes, impact and costs" (Kosecoff & Fink, 1982, p. 20). Rossi (1981) summarized it in more general terms as "the application of social science knowledge and research methods to the assessment of social programs" (p. 220).

And Weiss (1972) adds to Rossi's definition that this application is made "in an environment that is intrinsically inhospitable to them" (p. vii). For the purpose of the program evaluation undertaken in this study, Rossi's definition of evaluation may usefully be placed within the context of psychological knowledge and research methods specifically as these methods appear in clinical judgments, case histories, and experimental research.

The process of defining evaluation has included a heavy emphasis on delineating what it is not - i.e., not research, although research design may be part of the methodology (Worthen & Sanders, 1973), not judgment-free although the basis for making judgments must be explicit (Masters, 1984; Stake, 1976), not apolitical, although the collection of politically useful information should be objective and moral (Davidson, 1980; House, 1977), not value-free, although value judgments must be open to rational debate (Bazelon, 1982; Scriven, 1975).

As evaluation methodologies have moved away from a historical tie with measurement theory and research design, there has been a growth in the methodologies or the "metaphors" for evaluation (Smith, 1981). Although not yet solidly grounded in theory, a major philosophical basis of evaluation is essentially the epistemological question of how one can get at or know "truth" (House, 1977; Serlin & Lapsley, 1985; Scriven, 1975). Debate in sciences and social sciences over appropriate methods for reaching the fullest understanding of a phenomenon under study continues and has influenced the emerging discipline of evaluation (Rossi, 1981). Thus, while accepting controlled experimentation as a source of information having considerable value, most evaluators today reject the practice of theory verification through controlled analogue experimentation (Reim, 1981; Rossi, 1981; Smith, 1981). Scriven (1973) argues that "the greatest development in science is the history of the rational triumph of....value judgments, of new conceptions of 'good explanation', 'good theory', and 'good model' (paradigm), not just of one theory over another in a contest where the rules are agreed, nor just....of one prejudice over another" (Worthen & Sanders, 1973, p. 70). House

(1977), concurring with Cronbach's (1974) statement that "Generalizations decay" argues that since proofs are essentially acts of persuasion which can never be certain, only more or less credible, evaluation must be a logical examination of relevant information. Evaluation is therefore not a matter of certainty (impossible in human affairs) but of credibility and verifiability to the audiences concerned with decision making based on evaluation evidence. The expansion in the metaphors for evaluation has consequently grown with current interest in a wide range of quantitative and qualitative information sources. Methodologies on which humans have historically relied - methodologies of investigative journalism, of legal testimony, and of expert judges are now seen as worthy of consideration in evaluation if judged appropriate, feasible, and useful to those doing evaluation and those using the results of evaluation studies.

Evaluation Models

Discouragement with the endless categorization of evaluation approaches of which Cronbach (1980) speaks is echoed by Stake (1976) when he says, "There is nothing more tedious than having a collection of miscellaneous essays, each one decorated with the author's 'systematic' table or flowchart, all taking in each other's washing" (p. 10). While agreeing with the difficulty (and tediousness) of attempting a meaningful categorization of well over 40 published evaluation frame-works (Stake, 1976), there is nonetheless a need for creating some basis for ordering evaluation models available in order to consider and analyze them. Worthen & Sanders' (1973) elaborate taxonomy (see Table I) will consequently be used to compare and contrast three different evaluation approaches. The three approaches chosen have been labeled objectives - oriented, decision - oriented, and judgment - oriented. Each model represents differences which parallel major differences in psychological research design.

Table 1

Framework for Planning Evaluation Studies

Theory and Practice

	TYLER	STUFFLEBEAM	SCRIVEN
Definition	Comparing student performance with behaviorally stated objectives	Defining, obtaining, & using information for decision-making.	Gathering & combining performance data with weighted set of goal scales.
Purpose	To determine the extent to which purposes of a learning activity are actually being realized.	To provide relevant information to decision-makers.	To establish & justify merit or worth. Evaluation plays many roles.
Key Emphasis	Specification of objectives & measuring learning outcomes of pupils.	Evaluation reports used for decision-making.	Justification of gathering instruments, weightings, & selection of goals. Eval. model: combining data on different performance scales into a single rating.
Role of Evaluator	Curriculum specialist who evaluates as part of curriculum development & assessment.	Specialist who provides evaluation information to decision-makers.	Responsible for judging the merit of an educational practice for producers (formative) & consumers (summative).
Relationship To Objectives	Evaluation implies attainment of behavioral objectives stated at the beginning of the course.	Terminal stage in context eval. is setting objectives; input eval. produces ways to reach objectives; product eval. determines whether objectives are reached.	Look at goals & judge their worth. Determine whether they are being met.

(Table 1 continued)

	TYLER	STUFFLEBEAM	SCRIVEN
Relationship to Decision Making	Actual pupil performance data will provide information for the decision-maker to use on strengths & weaknesses of a course or curriculum.	Evaluation provides information for use in decision-making.	Evaluation reports (with judgments explicitly stated for producers or consumers) used in decision-making.
Types Of Evaluation	Pre-post measurement of performance.	(1) Context eval. (2) Input. (3) Process. (4) Product.	(1) Formative-summative (2) Comparative-non-comparative. (3) Instrinsic-pay off. (4) Mediated.
Constructs Proposed	(1) Statements of objectives in behavioral terms. (2) Teaching objectives are pupil-oriented. (3) Objectives must consider: pupil's entry behavior, analysis of our culture, school philosophy, learning, theories, new developments in teaching etc.	(1) Context eval. for planning decisions. (2) Input eval. for programming decisions. (3) Process eval. for implementing decisions. (4) Product eval. for recycling decisions.	(1) Distinction between goals (claims) & roles (functions.) (2) Several types of evaluation.
Criteria for Judging Evaluation	(1) Behavioral objectives clearly stated. (2) Objectives should contain references not only to course content but also to mental processes applied.	(1) Internal validity. (2) External validity. (3) Reliability. (4) Objectivity. (5) Relevance. (6) Importance. (7) Scope. (8) Credibility. (9) Timeliness. (10) Pervasiveness. (11) Efficiency.	(1) Should be predicted on goals. (2) Must indicate worth. (3) Should have construct validity. (4) Should be a wholistic program evaluation.

(Table 1 continued)

	TYLER	STUFFLEBEAM	SCRIVEN
Implications For Design	(1) Need to interpret & use results of assessment. (2) Develop designs to assess student progress.	(1) Experimental design not applicable. (2) Use of systems approach for evaluation studies. (3) Directed by administrator.	(1) Look at many factors. (2) Be involved in value judgments. (3) Require use of scientific investigations. (4) Evaluate from within (formative) or from without (summative).
Contributions	(1) Is easy to assess whether behavioral objectives are being achieved. (2) Is easy for practitioners to design evaluation studies. (3) Checks degree of congruency between performance & objectives; focus on clear definition of objectives	(1) Provides a service function by supplying data to administrators & decision-makers charged with conduct of the program. (2) Is sensitive to feedback. (3) Allows for evaluation to take place at any stage the program. (4) Wholistic.	(1) Discriminates between formative (on-going) & summative (end) evaluation. (2) Focus on direct assessment of worth focus on value. (3) Applicable in diverse contexts. (4) Analysis of means & ends. (5) Delineation of types of evaluation. (6) Evaluation of objectives.
Limitations	(1) Tendency to oversimplify program & focus on terminal rather than on-going & pre-program information. (2) Tendency to focus directly & narrowly on objectives, with little attention to worth of the objectives.	(1) Little emphasis on value concerns. (2) Decision-making process is unclear; methodology undefined. (3) May be costly complex if used entirely. (4) Not all activities are clearly evaluative.	(1) Equating performance on different criteria & assigning relative weights to criteria creates methodological problems. (2) No methodology for assessing validity of judgment. (3) Several overlapping concepts.

Note: From Educational Evaluation: Theory and Practice by B. R. Worthen and J. R. Sanders, 1973, Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company.

Objectives - oriented evaluation. The approach of Ralph Tyler represents the early emphasis in evaluation on an objectives-oriented approach based on experimental design methodology. The search for "outcomes" was pre-ordained at the outset of the study with no explicit judgment about the worth or merit of the specified outcomes, no search for unintended outcomes, little or no emphasis on process evaluation as related to outcome, and no consideration of the comparative cost-effectiveness of alternative programs. The approach has been useful in emphasizing the frequent difficulty in making behavioral objectives explicit and in emphasizing quantifiable measurement or gains as a criterion of successful outcome (Trusko & League, 1980; Worthen & Sanders, 1973). Apple (1974), nonetheless, argued that predetermined objectives, "embody an ideology of control....~~place~~ too high a value on certainty above all else, and are psychologically and philosophically naive" (p. 11). Buros (1977) also expressed concern that too great an emphasis was being placed on objective measurement especially test measurements since "....most standardized tests are poorly constructed, of questionable or unknown validity, pretentious in their claims and likely to be misused more often than not" (p. 11).

Historically, the break with Tyler's 1930 and 40's approach came with concern about the adequacy of American education as an aftermath to Sputnik. The resulting concern about education resulted in a call for program evaluation that could provide useful information to decision makers not only about outcomes at the conclusion of a program but about factors affecting performance during the process of a program. Further impetus was given to the development of more useful evaluation strategies by the failures of traditional evaluation studies to provide the useful information required by decision makers as a result of the 1965 Elementary-Secondary School Act in the United States. This Act was aimed at increasing effectiveness and accountability in education by requiring an evaluation of every authorized activity under its jurisdiction. The reception given to a large number of evaluation studies done during this period was less than enthusiastic. The "clinical signs" of evaluation failure pointed to by Guba (1969) would, I suspect, be repeated in counselling centres were a behavioral objectives evaluation approach similarly imposed on them. Among the clinical signs observed were (a) avoidance whenever possible, (b) anxiety in persons exposed, and (c) immobilization rather than responsiveness.

The response of evaluators was eventually a self-critical and productive one. Acceptance of the failure of evaluation for the needs of practitioners resulted in lively controversy, an expansion of methodologies used, and heightened attention to the information needs and values of evaluation audiences.

Decision-management evaluation. The decision-management evaluation approach of Stufflebeam (Stufflebeam, Foley, Gephart, Guba, Hammond, Merriman & Provus, 1971; Worthen & Sanders, 1973) exemplifies a turn to a more responsive evaluation process, as does the model proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1981). Stufflebeam's CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model includes a definition of evaluation as "the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives" (Worthen and Sanders, 1973, p. 129). Decision theory is the basis upon which the rigor and extensiveness of evaluation is determined. Programs expected to produce small changes would, for example, require less comprehensive evaluation than those in which changes are expected to be extensive or innovative.

Stufflebeam's model extends the goals of evaluation far beyond those of predetermined behavioral objectives to the more inclusive goals of context, input, process and product. Context evaluation includes consideration of the population characteristics, the environment in which the program is to occur, and a delineation of both general and specific goals to be achieved. Input evaluation includes the identification and assessment of the resources available for providing a program, strategies for achieving the program objectives, and design for implementing a selected program strategy. Questions of staff resources, time, budget constraints and organizational barriers are thus added to the theoretical and empirical rationale for the proposed program. Process evaluation is aimed at providing feedback to staff members which may affect future implementation procedures, and to provide information which will assist in interpreting program outcomes. Product evaluation includes not only determination of outcome but the interpretation of outcome information in relation to context, input, and process information.

Stufflebeam's decision-management model was useful in expanding the information base used for evaluation and in emphasizing the need to focus on the practical concerns of decision makers. This model, however, depends heavily on the expertise of an evaluation specialist, does not make explicit how various sources of information are combined and weighted, and may make unwarranted assumptions about the rationality of decision makers (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Judgment-oriented evaluation. The third evaluation model discussed contrasts with Tyler's objectives - oriented approach by considering intended as well as unintended effects (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) and contrasts with Stufflebeam's decision-management approach by extending and making explicit use of qualitative judgmental criteria while at the same time combining these qualitative criteria with criteria as assessed by statistical analysis and quasi-experimental design (Worthen & Sanders, 1973; Popham, 1974). Scriven's evaluation model is more detailed and comprehensive than can be easily summarized. Using the categories provided by Worthen and Sanders (1973), the following will highlight the components of this model.

Evaluation is defined as the gathering and combining of qualitative and quantitative information on both process and goals of a program. The purpose of evaluation (one that distinguishes it from the conclusions of a research study and from data-gathering activity) is the production of a judgment of the merit or worth of a procedure, program, or product.

The key emphasis of this approach is the call for explicit description and justification of all data gathering instruments (including a rationale for value judgments made). This approach also calls for a synthesis of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information.

The role of the evaluator is to take responsibility for judging merit either to producers in the case of formative evaluation, or to consumers in the case of summative evaluation. Scriven differentiates types of evaluation according to the following concepts, (a) formative or summative, (b) comparative or non-comparative, (c) intrinsic or pay-off, and (d) mediated. Formative evaluation serves the purpose of providing feedback to the program producers in order to improve the program. This type of evaluation is likely to be done by an internal evaluator who is knowledgeable about the program content and purposes. Summative evaluation is used at the conclusion of program development to decide whether support for the program should be continued. Summative evaluation is usually more extensive than formative although the techniques and procedures are similar. Good formative evaluation approaches the more stringent criteria of summative evaluation. An external evaluator is recommended for summative evaluation in order to maintain an objective stance while an internal evaluator, having greater familiarity with the program, is seen as more appropriate for formative evaluation. Bias is nevertheless considered endemic and reducible but not totally avoidable (Scriven, 1975).

Scriven views all evaluation as at least implicitly comparative. One may conclude that program A is better or worse than program B - an explicit comparison; or one may conclude that a goal or function is worth achieving and that a particular effort to achieve a goal is more or less successful than could reasonably be expected. Either of these comparative evaluations ultimately includes a judgment of effectiveness balanced against comparative costs. Effectiveness is judged on multiple criteria which may include measures such as expert judgments and consumer reactions.

Intrinsic evaluation is essentially that of construct validity and is deemed important especially in cases where outcomes are difficult to measure or do not reflect important goals that may not appear in outcome or pay-off measurement. Scriven concurs with the view that pure pay-off or outcome evaluation is likely to be superficial. The measurement of average differences in group performance may, for instance, mask important information regarding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of specific components of the program for the entire population or for specific sub-groups within the population. " Percentages are not very important. It is the nature of the mistakes that is important in evaluating the (program) and in rewriting it." (Worthen & Sanders, 1973, p. 82). The view appears consistent with Kazdin's (1983) proposal for dismantling and reconstructive strategies in treatment research. Scriven suggests that a reasonable rapprochement between too great an emphasis on either process or outcome criteria is a hybrid evaluation involving a weighting of intrinsic or process criteria as well as pay-off or outcome criteria. This multiple perspective approach is viewed as having a greater potential for obtaining data that are "real", "deep" and "hard" (Kidder, 1981). This approach will be apparent in the evaluation checklist used as a guideline for this study.

Specific suggestions for constructing hybrid or multi-faceted intrinsic and outcome criteria include the formulation of goals (some of which may not be measurable in any specific test or question response item), construction of a test-question pool of items which represent an operational version of the goals, and obtaining external judgments regarding the importance of the alleged goals and the relationship of the program content to the potential achievement of these goals. Assessment of program validity or match between the expected outcome goals and the program content is the basis of mediated evaluation.

Scriven's contributions have provided clarity in evaluation by discriminating between types of evaluation as well as discriminating between the goals and the roles of an evaluator. This approach is sufficiently comprehensive to include diverse evaluation contents and contexts (i.e., products or programs). He also contributed significantly by focusing on the necessarily judgmental, value-loaded aspects of scientific or systematic inquiry. By objectifying those judgments, he has bridged a gap between research inquiry and evaluation inquiry by pointing out that knowledge is a matter of degree and of kind. He argues that the search for useful and applicable knowledge can ill afford to be unnecessarily restricted in the methodologies used.

Limitations of Scriven's evaluation approach are related to the assessment and weighting of judgment criteria and to the "excessive perfectionism" (Popham, 1974) of the model. Considerable judgment is required to determine whose judgments will be used for what and how much weight will be ascribed to each. Much appears to depend on the evaluator's judgment as to who should be considered consumers, and how one goes about "setting snares" for unintended effects. The usefulness of experienced clinical or expert judgments in determining the presence or lack of significant components in a counselling program, interview, or approach is well-accepted in clinical practice (Kidder, 1981). Scriven is stressing the importance of such judgments but putting them into a weighted scheme for final analysis. This procedure is similar to the argument for clinical judgment of relevant factors followed by an objective or statistical combining of those factors in the improper linear decision-making model proposed by Dawes (1979) as a means of bridging the scientist-practioner gap.

A second criticisn of Scriven's model is that put forward by judges assessed by Scriven himself, as "some of the most experienced (evaluation) developers in the country", (Popham, 1974, p. 89). The criticism is that "nothing has ever been produced anywhere that met these standards, [and] that the cost of meeting all the criteria proposed would be prohibitive" (Popham, 1974, p. 89). Scriven argues that errors of excess are less serious than errors of omission when the long-term costs of a program are at stake. His position is that all items on his checklist are important and should serve as a guide to the adequacy of any study. He is willing to allow, nonetheless, that "it is acceptable to speculate about two or three of the items on which there is not direct evidence; especially when evaluation funds are minimal" (p.11). Worthen and Sanders (1973) suggest that Scriven's guidelines should serve as a heuristic device for planning evaluation designs. This view has been accepted for this study.

Evaluation Methodology and Counselling Research

The convergence of evaluation methodologies and research methodologies in applied psychology can be viewed as stemming from similar concerns with producing information that is, in fact, useful to practitioners (or decision-makers) who have a responsibility for making decisions despite having little empirical evidence on which to base those decisions. Applied psychologists have come to the realization that "pure" research has often not been generalizable to field settings. (Azrin, 1977; Goldman, 1976; Repucci & Sanders, 1974; Serlin & Lapsley, 1985). The slow progress of both theoretical and empirical work in psychology has led to rejection of traditional research methodology as the primary means of verifying knowledge. "The almost universal reliance on merely refuting the null hypothesis as the standard method for corroborating substantive theories [in psychology] is a terrible mistake, is basically unsound, poor scientific strategy, and one of the worst things that every happened in the history of psychology," (Meehl, 1978, p. 817). Not only is this research methodology seen as unproductive to the development of theory (Meehl, 1967), but also of negligible benefit to practitioners (Gynther & Green, 1982; Garmazy, 1982). The heavy emphasis on controlled experimental studies has given way to a paradigm shift which includes the increased legitimacy of quasi-experimental and observational studies in natural settings (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Guba, 1986; Kaufmann & Stroheimer, 1981; Stuart & Roper, 1977).

The search for alternative or additional means of generating or verifying knowledge has led to a restructuring and reconsideration of epistemological approaches that make science a search for what is "rationally justifiable" (Serlin & Lapsley, 1985, p. 73) rather than certain. House (1977) argues that the possibility of informed action is increased rather than decreased once the burden of certainty is lifted and judgments are made on the basis of "the credible, the plausible, and the probable" (p. 6). Alternative paradigms in which decisions are made on evidence that had been judged adequate or "good enough" are currently proposed. (Serlin & Lapsley, 1985).

This more pragmatic approach has been welcomed by investigators in field settings who were formerly left with a choice between doing less than ideal research or no research at all (Cowen, 1978). Advocates of evaluation research, however, often still find themselves apologizing for deviations from experimental design. " When the technology of social learning approaches in therapy moved into the community....in major efforts to improve the quality of human service in many settings, the potential for societal gain from technology grew exponentially but so, too, did problems inherent in efforts to achieve rigorous experimental evaluations of the evolving programs." (Stuart & Roper, 1979, p. 229).

Reactions to these "problems" have included cautious approval for deviating from experimental methodology (Stuart & Roper, 1979) to wholehearted acceptance of evaluation methodologies and a redefinition of "the problem" as a conceptual problem to overcome rather than a deficiency in methodology to remedy (Davidson, 1980; Guba, 1986).

The basic concern, then, of evaluation is the same as that of applied research. Both aim for systematic and objective inquiry involving relevant data. Furthermore, if the goal of evaluator and practitioner is to improve the behavior of an organization or of practitioners, there is a need to address the issues and relate the data obtained with a therapeutic orientation, i.e., one that takes account of the organization's or practitioner's perspective and values. Here the clinician's "theoretical orientation" may be analogous to the evaluator's "political orientation". Both must address the concerns, perspectives, and values of the consumers of information if the practical benefits of engaging in evaluation research are to be realized (Davidson, 1980; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; House, 1977).

Azrin (1977) summarizes the essential differences between the aims of applied (decision-driven) research and those of pure (theory-driven) research as differences in emphasis on (1) outcome vs. conceptual analysis, (2) clinical significance vs. response simplicity, (3) situational complexity vs. stimulus and laboratory simplicity, (4) systems heterogeneity vs. subject homogeneity, (6) subject preference vs. objective apparatus measurements, (7) practicability and cost benefits vs. statistical significance, and (8) side effects vs. central tendency. In this description one can read, "evaluation" for "applied research".

It has been argued (Worthen & Sanders, 1973) that an additional component of applied research which may differentiate it from evaluation is the intent of applied research to be generalizable. Applied research, while mission-oriented, is usually directed to a general problem for which a solution will be generalizable to other contexts in which the problem occurs. Evaluation is focused on collecting specific information relevant to a specific problem, program, or product. The information obtained in one context is useful in other contexts only to the extent that the same conditions exists in each context. The difference in intent of applied research as compared to evaluation may, however, be clearer than the application of that intent. Similarity in population and in context is obviously necessary for any generalization to hold.

Summary

One may view the three evaluation approaches described as reflecting perspectives similar to those in counselling research. Tyler's behavioral-objectives approach is focused on hypothesized measurable outcomes in a fashion similar to the setting of a null hypothesis with specified dependent variables. Stufflebeam's decision-management approach contains a rejection of an experimental approach and depends heavily on expert judgment and process variables in a manner similar to a clinical decision-making process and to phenomenological research. Scriven's evaluation approach combines elements of both approaches. Qualitative, judgmental observations from a wide range of consumers (e.g., subjects, trainers, administrators, experts) are combined with the quantitative data of experimental or quasi-experimental design. Attention is given to detailed description of the relevant population, program or product, process, and intended and unintended outcome variables as well as to providing an explicit rationale for the judgments and weights given each component of the aggregated data. This multi-faceted approach is seen as compensating for the more certain but more circumscribed information generally obtained by a rigorously controlled experimental inquiry.

Distance Education

Institutional and Administrative Characteristics

"Distance education" refers to instructional systems which do not include face-to-face interaction between student and instructor and which typically do not require a student's presence in classes. Distance education may refer to instruction by communication media such as print, television, radio, telephone and computers. Distance universities have arisen largely in response to an increasing demand for post-secondary education by adults (Thomas, 1975). Instructional systems which permit access to education by adults who by reason of interest, geography or by reason of responsibilities which conflict with attendance in a traditional university program have often been developed alongside non-traditional administrative policies such as open admission, self-paced instruction, and contract learning. Thus distance universities may have a number of characteristics which affect student response and the assessment of those responses. These differences consequently make difficult a comparative analysis with students in traditional universities, or even students within different distance universities.

Athabasca University's distance education system consists of a home-study instructional system based primarily on textbook and other print-based material, and the provision to each student of a course tutor who is available by telephone. Administration and instructional policies relevant to evaluation are Athabasca University's open admission policy, year-round admission, self-paced course schedule, and lengthy time lines for course completion. These policies result in (a) an absence of any selection of students on the basis of previous education, (b) continual registration of new students throughout the year, (c) and very little institutional pressure for course progress and course completion. These policies serve to define student characteristics and expectations as well as defining the kind of counselling intervention strategies that might be feasible (e.g., students are never physically together at any one place or time and students may begin their course or program at any time throughout the year). Some of these administrative and instructional policies contrast sharply with distance universities having similar home-study and telephone tutorial instructional programs (Empire State College, 1975; Gooler & Sell, 1979; Moran & Croker, 1981).

Student Population

Distance universities typically focus on an adult student population. The average age tends to run around 33 years (Smyrnew, 1983) with majority of students between 25 and 45. The educational background of students in distance universities is likely to be extremely variable except for the few universities whose admission process is highly selective (Empire State College Research Series, 1982; Metropolitan State College, 1981). Requirements such as the two-week summer school requirement at the British Open University serve as a selective procedure sorting out people who are unable or unwilling to spend the time and money involved in summer school attendance. Metropolitan State College in Minnesota restricts enrollment to students already having two years university credit.

The heterogeneity of distance university student populations in age and educational background is greater than that of most traditional university populations. The direct applicability of research literature on traditional university student populations is therefore questionable. Designing programs for distance university students therefore poses special problems since the range of needs, values, and life styles of the student population is great.

Attrition in Distance Education

Attrition rates. Attrition is defined differently and data collected differently by different institutions. This data is consequently difficult or impossible to deal with in a comparative analysis of attrition (Shale, 1982). Approximately 95 percent of attrition/retention studies have been on age-homogeneous traditional university students. Even within this relatively homogeneous population and within similar educational systems, there is great variation in attrition. Dropout rates within the freshman year vary from 75 percent at junior and community college to less than 20 percent at selective private universities (Empire State College, 1982).

Meaningful comparison of attrition rates within distance universities is even more difficult. In distance universities there are great differences in definition as well as differences in admission and withdrawal policies. Admission procedures may be highly influential in determining factors such as student commitment, motivation, and preparation. At Athabasca University, for example, a student may be admitted and registered in a course within a ten to fifteen minute period at any time during the year. The period of reflection or preparation for becoming a university student may consequently be short indeed. The time periods permitted for course completion are extensive (i.e., up to 18 months for a 3-credit course) and allow a student to regard the time needed for completion as having small impact on life style. The withdrawal policy does not impose a negative sanction on informally dropping out or formally withdrawing from a course. Impressions from Student Service staff indicate that the correspondence or home-study nature of the instructional system is frequently seen as potentially less demanding both in terms of academic level as well as time required for successful completion than is true of traditional university work.

The completion rate frequently cited for the British Open University is 70 percent. A differing estimate based on completion rates of students who have gone through the stage of acceptance, provisional enrollment and are the "finally registered" is 36 percent (Shale, 1982.)

Empire State College (1982) reports their course completion rate for 29 courses presented over three terms was 52 percent. On a field test of two Open University courses, Empire State found attrition rates of 66 percent and 27 percent respectively. In another report of attrition rates for single courses and for part-time students, Baath (1982) reports the overall course attrition rate at the University of Lund at 69 percent.

Athabasca University's Office of Institutional Studies (1982) has addressed the comparative analysis of attrition at least partially through a differentiation of students who (Formula 1) enroll in a course but show no evidence of beginning work on that course and (Formula 2) students who enroll in a course, begin work then fail to complete the course work. Using Formula 1 the overall completion completion rate is 28.8 percent (26.5 percent for the Edmonton area) and using Formula 2 the overall completion rate is 58.2 percent. The Institutional Studies report concludes:

> The proportion of students not generating any credit (i.e., the non-starts) remains at about one-half the total number of enrollments. Despite some unreasonableness in assuming that all students not generating any credit should be classified as non-starts, it is clear that the greatest effect on completion rates could be achieved by reducing the number of "non-start" students.

The report goes on to comment that "From these measures we can see at what point in a course students typically drop out and perhaps infer a strategy for intervening that might help students persist" (p. 2).

Attrition problem. The attrition "problem" is also conceptualized in a number of different ways. Studies of attrition by Empire State College (1982) suggest that there is a level of attrition at any institution that is "uncontrolled, irreducible, and personal" (p. 5) and therefore not subject to remediation. Empire State's extensive evaluation program has led them to conclude that for their institution, the irreducible level of attrition is 16 percent. They also calculate that any intervention achieving a 5 percent reduction in their overall current level of attrition (55 percent) is a significant or worthwhile reduction. The argument is made that the very characteristics (e.g., self-paced, independent study) which attract students ~~to a distance~~ university program are also paradoxically the characteristics that make persistence in such a program difficult. Accepting an irreducible level of attrition may, therefore, be necessary.

As a result, the question of whether attrition is a problem to be rectified or an expected and acceptable result of a mandate to increase educational access for people who cannot attend a conventional university is debated. The working assumption of most distance universities is, nevertheless, that attrition can and should be reduced (Baath, 1982; Mills, 1978).

Student Counselling in Distance Universities

Counselling interventions for distance education students require consideration of (a) population characteristics, (b) the communication media through which counselling may occur, (c) the counselling approach appropriate to a setting in which it is to occur. This section will briefly summarize literature on the characteristics and needs of distance education students, will discuss considerations of the communication media available, and will address questions related to the choice of counselling approaches suitable to the setting under consideration.

Characteristics of Adult Learners in Non-Traditional Study

The characteristics of adult students in non-traditional post-secondary study have been investigated in a number of ways. A frequently used method has been survey questionnaires covering demographic information and self-report assessments (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; McCannon, 1973; Thomas, 1975). A second method has been analyses by experts (e.g., adult educators and psychologists) based on experience, in-depth interviews and other empirical work (Boshier, 1976; Houle, 1961; Tough, 1971). A third focus of interest for non-traditional educational systems is the trait-by-treatment literature which relates students characteristics to instructional system characteristics (McCann & Short, 1982; Goldberg, 1972). A fourth basis of inquiry, theory related to adult learning and motivation, is briefly addressed.

Survey assessment. Cross (1981) and Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1974) will be used to represent the large body of literature which is based on surveys of adult learner characteristics.

Cross (1981) analysis of adult learner trends indicates that there exists a reasonably consistent profile of adults enrolled in non-traditional programs. This profile consists of people who, compared to their younger counterparts in traditional universities, are better educated and hold better jobs, and are likely to be career oriented in their educational goals. Cross suggests that increases in adult participation in education reflect a new "cyclic life plan" that is replacing the "linear life plan", a life pattern in which education was viewed as being for the young, work for the middle-aged, and leisure for the elderly. Education is viewed not as a privilege or a right but as a necessity for making transitional developmental changes. Cross also suggests that the older and more established learner will more likely select non-traditional educational programs that do not require as drastic a change in life-style as attendance on a traditional campus.

Survey information that may contribute to an analysis of the needs to which a counselling intervention may be focused is exemplified by the self-reported situational and dispositional characteristics reported in a national survey conducted for the Commission on Non-Traditional Study (Carp, Peterson & Roelfs, 1974).

Table 2

Commission on Non-Traditional Study:

Perceived Barriers to Learning

Barriers	Percentage of Potential Learners
Situational Barriers	
Cost, including tuition, books, child care, and so on	53
Not enough time	46
Home responsibilities	32
Job responsibilities	28
No child care	11
No transportation	8
No place to study or practice	7
Friends or family don't like the idea	3
Institutional Barriers	
Don't want to go to school full time	35
Amount of time required to complete program	21
Courses aren't scheduled when I can attend	16
No information about offerings	16
Strict attendance requirements	15
Courses I want don't seem to be available	12
Too much red tape in getting enrolled	10
Don't meet requirements to begin program	6
No way to get credit or a degree	5
Dispositional Barriers	
Afraid that I'm too old to begin	17
Low grades in past, not confident in my ability	12
Not enough energy and stamina	9
Don't enjoy studying	9
Tired of school, tired of classrooms	6
Don't know what to learn or what it would lead to	5
Hesitate to seem too ambitious	3

Potential learners are those who indicated a desire to learn but who are not currently engaged in organized instruction.

Note: From Adults as Learners by P. K. Cross, 1980, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Such surveys suggest that a distance university system which incorporates a flexible self-paced schedule and an open admissions policy may be effectively removing institutional barriers while leaving in place the situational and dispositional barriers to learning. Such factors as competing loyalties to home and job responsibilities combined with a perceived lack of support by family and friends which are specified as situational barriers may become major obstacles to learning if not dealt with effectively. Dispositional barriers, such as the fear of being too old, fear of inadequate ability, and fear of seeming too ambitious may also be potentially hazardous to continued effort. Institutional programs which focus on removal of the institutional barriers while neglecting student support services that may help to alleviate the more personal and social barriers may be lacking critical components.

Expert analyses of distance education student needs. Analyses by adult educators and counsellors echo some of the self-reported views of students but extend the range of "needful" characteristics to some that students may be reluctant to admit or of which they may be unaware. The following provides a sampling of views.

Childs (1973) reports adult correspondence students tend to be less committed to course of study, to have low levels of self-expectation in regard to education, and to feel isolated from the institution.

Vontress (1970) feels those absent from learning for some time tend to be over-anxious about their ability to learn.

McDaniel (1969) describes adult learners as reluctant to take problems to others, time pressured, and unaware of the potential use of counselling.

Murgatroyd and Redmond (1978) note that the adult need for feeling independent requires a collaborative counselling approach aimed at assisting adult students in maintaining that independence and control.

Simpson (1977) states that adults in distance education are likely to face many of the same problems as younger students in conventional universities but feels these problems are likely to be felt more frequently and more intensely. The problems identified are deficits in skills, role conflicts, motivational problems, problems of emotional adjustment, and problems in personal identity and personal development.

Fisher (1969) suggests the most common adult student problems are lack of self-confidence, unrealistic expectations, conflicts in attitudes and values, learning tasks which seem irrelevant, failure to seek help until it is too late, and poor reading and study habits

Duby and Giltrow (1978) feel that little is known about the learning habits and cognitive styles of mature students, particularly where self-study and distance media are involved.

Bowen, Edelstein, & Medsker (1977) hypothesize that home-study students lacking the support and reinforcement of student peer groups will exhibit an acute anxiety related to academic performance. They summarize the literature as indicating that the primary problems faced by non-traditional students (apart from family and social problems) to be the following: lack of confidence, inadequate study skills, difficulty making educational choice, unrealistic expectations, and frustration due to the apparent irrelevancy of courses to aspirations or interests

This sampling of views on the needs of adults in distance education suggests that a broad range of issues could be usefully addressed through a counselling intervention. Focus on many issues relating to unrealistic expectations, confidence and motivation, learning skills, role conflicts, or use of institutional resources could form the basis of an exploratory intervention. These issues are often seen as developmental or transitional problems in living that are amenable to a variety of psychoeducational approaches (Bloom, 1971, Lecomte, Dumont, & Zingle, 1981; Schlossberg, 1984).

Trait-by-treatment research. Trait-by-treatment models are viewed by some (Goldberg, 1972; McCann & Short, 1982; Sarason, 1979) as a promising means of sorting out the interactive complexity of educational system characteristics and learner characteristics. Moore (1972), for instance, suggests that dependent people need traditional classroom instruction while independent people, especially the majority or adults, find distance education a welcome opportunity for learning. Astin (1977), following an apparently similar interactionist view, suggests that there are drop-out-prone personalities in higher education and that the person-environment match is critical in maximizing academic success. Tinto (1975) also argues that student persistence is related to both academic and social student-institution interaction.

Considerable effort has been put into research relating person attributes to the attributes of the learning environment (Huebner, 1981). The complexity of measuring these interactions (McCann & Short, 1982) has, however, been discouraging. It is argued, nevertheless, that the difficulties of measurement reflect the complexity existing in life and should not, on that account, be abandoned in favor of simple but inaccurate assessments of student attributes independently of institutional or instructional attributes.

Goldberg's (1972) large scale study of students studying under home-study and classroom instructional methods is illustrative of the difficulties of measurement and of the application of such research to a distance university population. In this study, an extensive battery of personality tests yielding 350 test scores was administered to 800 students. No significant interaction effects were found, and the applicability of the results to a distance university population is limited by the experimental condition. The "home-study" students were on-campus students taking only one out of five courses by home-study and meeting with their classmates to do the experimental testing. Those " home-study" students were, consequently, in considerably different circumstances than Athabasca University students who typically study at home, have little or no contact with other students, and usually only telephone contact with a tutor, library staff and other resources. A similar analysis of students using exclusively home-study instruction compared with students using classroom instruction would have greater applicability to distance universities.

While an interactionist approach may hold promise for differentiating who is more likely to be successful in a distance educational system, at present there is insufficient evidence on which to base decisions as to what type of person is more likely to be successful in a distance education system. There is, nonetheless, a strongly held view among Athabasca University students (Delehanty, 1982) and staff that self-motivation and self-management are critical student characteristics in an instructional system having relatively few external constraints or pressures and with little or no peer support.

Contributions of adult learning theory. Theory of adult learning is fragmented, and furnishes interesting but sparse information for program development in a specific and unique educational system such as Athabasca University. Cross (1981) states, "Theory is almost non-existent in adult education and in adult motivation for learning" (p. 109). However, common elements among models of adult learning (Miller, 1976; Rubenson, 1977; Boshier, 1973) provide a further base of information relevant to consideration of counselling intervention. The following components are seen as commonalities across models (Cross, 1981):

> Each believes a dynamic interaction between the individual's perception of self and perception of the learning situation will determine whether participation will occur and be maintained.
>
> Each assumes some form of congruence must exist between the learner's attitudes, values and goals and those of the educational system (as expressed mainly by the people within the system).
>
> All assume that the use of a needs hierarchy such as Maslow's will determine whether time and energy will be spend on education either to fulfill achievement or self-actualization needs.
>
> All regard "significant others" and reference group as important in the provision or lack of provision of support which may determine whether participation is continued.
>
> All mention the expectancy of positive effects or reinforcement of some kind if participation is to occur and continue.

These theoretical commonalities suggest that an effective counselling intervention should encompass the following: (a) awareness of self and of the learning situation encountered, (b) assessment of whether there is a match between personal and institutional expectations and values, (c) resolution of how educational goals will fit into other needs and other roles, (d) methods for obtaining support from significant others, and (e) methods for obtaining positive reinforcement for efforts made.

These theoretical commonalities dovetail with those issues arising from self-report surveys, from expert analyses, and from the rationale behind trait-by-treatment research.

Distance Counselling Media

The geographical distribution of the population from which a distance university draws its students has great impact on the kinds of communication media used in providing instructional and support services. Programs planned for Athabasca University must consequently take account a geographical distribution of students in which approximately half the Athabasca University student body resides in Edmonton and Calgary, and the remaining students in either rural Alberta or outside Alberta.

The range of media used for distance counselling includes television, radio, print (either printed information, written correspondence, or programmed guidebooks), computer-assisted programs, teleconference, audio-cassette and, predominantly, telephone.

Since characteristics of the communication channel used are of primary concern in comparisons of face-to-face (i.e., all channels open) counselling with distance interactions (i.e., limited channels used), it is significant to note that these communications interactions are extraordinary complex and that only a few variables have been studies under controlled analogue conditions (Dilley, Lee & Verrill, 1971; Shapiro, 1966). Comparisons of print and face-to-face group orientations suggest that print may have an advantage in getting factual knowledge across while group workshops are more successful in changing attitudes and perceptions of the student-environment interaction (Fisher, 1975; Forrer, 1974). This work must be viewed as very tentative, however, since there are innumerable ways for designing print material and group workshops.

In distance education settings, even with extensive exposure to various distance forms of communication, there is, nevertheless, an expressed preference for face-to-face communication by a majority of students (Kelly & Swift, 1983; Moore, 1981). This preference is especially pronounced for communication of personal issues. Print and audio-cassettes lack an interactive component but are relatively cost-efficent and are accessible to the entire student population. For the particular context of this study it was the geographical spread of students outside major urban areas that created a major limitation on viable communication processes. Telephone communication is limited not only by its sensory restrictions but by its cost. Computers, television, teleconference and radio were limited by both the characteristics of the media as well as cost and access by a significant proportion of the student body. For these reasons, print and audio-cassettes appeared to have substantial advantages.

The geographical distribution of students required that student support programs be available at a distance if student access were to be possible. The desirability of face-to-face programs together with the large concentration of students in urban areas suggested that a face-to-face program would best meet the needs of a large proportion of the student body. A second program designed for print and audio-cassettes appeared to be the most cost-effective means of serving the needs of a geographically distant student body.

Counselling Setting Considerations

Description of the setting in which program development occurs is an important element in the evaluation of that program. We will consider here the response of Athabasca University students and of students in somewhat similar situations to offers of counselling services. Implications for the design and evaluation of programs will be suggested.

If a counselling intervention is to be well utilized, an important aspect of the program is its appeal and acceptability (as well as its usefulness and accessibility) to the target population. If a program is to be of a voluntary nature, consideration of its appeal in terms of the help-seeking characteristics of the population becomes of even greater import.

The experience of staff members of Athabasca University indicated that students differed greatly in their use of resources available to them. The majority of students, however, did not utilize the weekly tutorial sessions available, rarely contacted professors, were unlikely to use library reference services beyond those specifically required,[1] and were unlikely to initiate counselling contacts when encountering difficulties (R. Coulter & C. Nelson, personal communication, November, 1984;). Records indicate that in instances when specific "enrichment seminars" with face-to-face tutor contact were offered, only 8.9 precent of students responded. When seminars on study skills and course assignments were offered, 24.3 percent of students responded (G. Peruniak, personal communication, May, 1985). Records of the Edmonton Regional Office of Athabasca University indicate that one third of students registering in that office have had an interview with a counsellor. In over 90 percent of the cases, this interview is likely to be held within a two week period before admission and registration (Delehanty, 1984). Despite this relatively high rate of initial contact, invitations to Edmonton area students in the 1984-85 term elicited only a 1.7 precent response to career planning workshops, a 1.96 percent response to learning and study skills workshops, and less than a 1.0 percent response to an invitation to discuss establishment of peer support or social groups. These experiences suggested that factors related to student utilization of services may be important considerations in program planning.

The experience of Athabasca University students appeared to be similar to that of students in other distance universities. There is a considerable amount of data indicating that the initial phase of getting started with a course study is the most critical period in determining whether a student completes a course (Baath, 1982; Mills, 1975). Daniel and

Marquis (1979) have termed this "the induction crisis". At that point, a coping response of withdrawal may seem most accessible (Nicholsen, 1977).

The most readily visible and structured support during this initial phase of getting started is typically a tutor. Reports from tutors at different institutions suggest that from 20 to 80 percent of a student's concerns at this point are unrelated to course content (Baath, 1982; Mills, 1975). While tutors vary in response to non-course related concerns of students, a substantial number see these concerns as a source of frustration in their efforts to assist students with subject matter (Bradley, 1975). The Open University's first year tutor-counsellor system allows for greater concentration on non-course related concerns within the more broadly defined and structured helping relationship. The experience of tutor-counsellors in this system is that most support is needed before or as students start their courses and in the period of time just prior to examinations (Thorpe, 1978). Tutor-counsellor's preferred method of giving extra support was through small group sessions. Using this system, the "Special Support Scheme" (Thorpe, 1978) at the Open University was able to decrease drop-out rates and increase completions. The group receiving extra support also received a slightly higher rate of failing grades than those not receiving extra counselling time. This may reflect the slightly poorer educational background of these students compared to the average but also suggests considerable perseverance of these students in the face of academic difficulties. A previous attempt to provide extra support for those considered high risks (i.e., students with less formal education) was abandoned when counsellors found that students they perceived as "at risk" in the sense of needing extra support were often students with strong educational backgrounds. (Thorpe, 1978)

The inclination of students in distance universities appears to be, then, to seek help if help is available in an acceptable fashion prior to or at the beginning of their academic program. Very few students initiate help-seeking after the initial phase of their course of study, and if they have a tutor who attempts to assist them, will often resist these offers of help after the initial six to eight weeks of a course contract have elapsed with no apparent student progress (C. Nelson, personal communication, November, 1985). Offers of specific task-oriented support (e.g., study skills related to course assignments) are more readily accepted than offers of more personal or social support (G. Peruniak, J. Orton, personal communication, May, 1985).

Questions regarding (a) why people do not use resources available to them, and (b) what conditions (internal or external to the person) are associated with utilization of counselling services have recently received attention as an interest in a preventive or anticipatory guidance emphasis has emerged for health and counselling professionals (Kessler & Albee, 1975; Nadler, 1983). Previous attempts to define the characteristics of a helping relationship in terms of the characteristics of the target populations have given way to a greater focus on the interactions occurring within the helping relationship (Nadler, 1983). Acknowledgement of mechanisms that allow people to expose a naivete or weakness is relevant to the design and the promotion of a counselling intervention.

Sarason (1980) suggests that adults have invested a great deal of energy in nurturing the myth of personal freedom and are, consequently, uncomfortable when a new experience leads then to feel less in control than previously. Re-entry or entry into a non-traditional university program may be perceived as a challenge or as a threat and, in either case, is likely to involve some transitional stresses and development of adaptational responses (Schlossberg, 1984). Whether difficulty in making that adaptation is seen as a problem for which assistance is sought appears to depend on (a) the perception of the causes of the difficulty (e.g., whether it's my problem or the external demands placed on me), (b) the possible means of handling the difficulty (e.g., doing nothing, taking direct self-corrective action, asking others for informal advice, or consulting a professional), (c) the balance between the facilitating and inhibitory elements in a decision to seek help (e.g., the cost, quality and availability of help), and (d) the personal feelings (e.g., the intensity of the problem, the perception of self-esteem loss, and belief about the value of solving one's own problems). Because of these complex and interconnected issues, it is estimated that only half the people feeling as if they need help actually seek help because of the attendant perceived disadvantages (Ames, 1983, Fisher, Winer & Abramowitz, 1983).

Once a decision to seek help is made, a forthcoming attitude change appears to depend heavily on (a) the counsellee's concept of the origin of the difficulty, (b) the expectancy that improvement will occur and (c) the relationship established with the professional helper (Frank, 1982; Fisher, Winer, Abramowitz, 1983). Kelly (1978) warns that a pro-active approach to students must be sensitive to the importance of avoiding any approach that may be seen as interfering, checking-up or patronizing. Ames (1983) also warns that specific counselling interventions aimed at high-risk students or at students who have recently experienced failure may serve to worsen low self-esteem. Ames suggests the research on help-seeking in academic settings indicates that helping efforts will be less threatening to ego-involvement concerns if help is posed as assistance on specific tasks or problem-solving strategies that require improvements. Motivation to use counselling programs appears to be increased by presentation of information on how a counselling intervention has been helpful to others, on the probability of success of those participating, and on program content as a means of enhancing competencies already existing rather than remediation of an acknowledged weakness (Ames, 1983; Nadler, 1983).

Summary

The literature on adult learners, particularly those enrolled in distance universities, suggests that when institutional barriers such as requirements for pre-admission academic work and class attendance are removed, there exists a relatively high rate of attrition compared to traditional universities. The needs of adult students in this environment reflect those of adult students in conventional universities but may be exacerbated by the isolation of independent study and by unfamiliarity with distance education. Adults are often uncertain about their capacity to return to the formal learning demands of a university system, likely to find the responsibilities of work and family competing with their courses for their time and energy, and reluctant to seek the assistance of professional counsellors. Distance university students are also likely to feel more isolated from the institution, to lack the pressure and support of peers and, in the case of the Athabasca University system, to lack much of the external structure and pressure of specific time lines or negative sanctions characteristic of their previous educational experience. Athabasca University students are also likely to lack awareness of how a distance educational system works.

Theories of adult learning and adult motivation for learning suggest that students must feel that their perception of themselves fits with the expectations of the institution, that they have the available time and energy to focus on education, that they have the support of significant others and that they must experience positive reinforcement for their efforts. Trait-by-treatment research has been proposed as useful in differentiating which student characteristics fit with which institutional characteristics. However, this research is in early stages and provides few guidelines at this time. The frequently suggested link between student characteristics such as self-motivation and independence and distance university systems have not been empirically demonstrated but is supported by student and staff observations. The help-seeking characteristics of adult students suggest that reluctance to seek professional help may be tempered by a pro-active task-oriented approach that is aimed at typical concerns and presented as an enhancement of existing competencies. The need for early timing of such an approach before problems have occurred suggests the usefulness of a preventive intervention.

Prevention Models

The concept of prevention in counselling is drawn largely from the experience of public health recognition (a) that some aspects of pathology were associated with social and environmental forces (e.g., life stresses and sanitary conditions), and (b) that it was not necessary to be fully knowledgeable about all aspects of the etiology of a disorder to develop successful preventive measures (Forgays, 1983). The concept is a movement away from a medical model of treatment to a model of pathology as having multiple causation and therefore multiple avenues for intervention. The explanatory model used to account for pathology or distress have varied with time and have implications for choosing prevention strategies. The strategies of "avoidance of masturbation, of disappointment in love, of strains or frights" recommended by Bleuler (Kessler & Albee, 1975) for prevention of schizophrenia would, for example, have a hard time selling in 1986.

Prevention strategies have been defined as those strategies which reduce the incidence of "social malaise" (Forgays, 1983) or problem behavior. Prevention is aimed at a population for whom a targeted problem may arise. If focused on a population already identified as victims, an intervention is likely to have remediation or treatment focus.

A major difference in preventive approaches is in the degree to which the goal of intervention is on change in environmental conditions or on change in the targeted population's preparation for coping with difficulties encountered within that environment. Kessler and Albee (1975) observed that:

> It is true that many observers of our social pathology argue that patchwork solutions will not do, and that the whole structure of our polluted, industrialized, racist society breeds such massive human injustice and distress that the only hope for prevention is for major social reorganization. (p. 576)

To wait for such major social reorganization and treat only those already in serious difficulty is, nonetheless, seen as untenable. It is argued that "prevention is far more effective than our capacity to repair, and it is short-sighted bordering on blindness to build up the clinical endeavor at the expense of the preventive one" (Sarason, 1977). It is further argued that to the extent that humans have input into the construction of their own social reality and to the extent that humans can learn methods for coping with the personal and social problems they face, prevention efforts or "anticipatory guidance" are sorely needed and of demonstrated effectiveness (Bandura, 1974; Drum & Figler, 1976; Maccoby, 1980; Kessler & Albee, 1975; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

> So called 'normal' people want prevention and enrichment. They want the wherewithal to anticipate and deal with the many major personal and interpersonal events of living - they want a tool kit along with the car. ... There is a need and a demand for self-directed personal and vocational exploration programs, personal and marital enrichment programs, mental health checkups and preventive maintenance programs. (Kagen, 1977, p. 5)

This "wherewithal to anticipate and deal with" environmental or social events reflects the prevailing interactive prevention model. This model incorporates both the need for a focus on the impact of the social situation in which the problem occurs as well as a focus on how a person perceives, anticipates and evaluates those external events and a person's power to influence the effects of those events (Lazarus, 1980). Treatment strategies may then include virtually anything that can affect psychological well-being. Two common strategies are to teach coping skills, and to teach coping attributions for success and failure (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1979).

Applications of this interactive prevention model in education settings is seen as promising. Interventions which are pro-active in nature and which provide the anticipatory guidance aimed at preventing frustration and stress are proposed (Drum & Figler, 1976 Maccoby, 1980). What constitutes a preventive intervention in an academic setting, however, may be difficult to discern. What must be done is to "separate the near infinity of manipulations that could potentially affect well-being into those we know [and can do] something about and those we know [or can do] little about" (Forgays, 1983, p. 704). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that the AA's serenity prayer applies to both alcoholics and to psychologists planning prevention programs. Each hopes that "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference".

Orientation programs are an example of prevention programs in academic settings. Such programs vary greatly, however, in the extent to which efforts are made to deal with more than informational deficits (Bloom 1971; Delehanty, 1982; Gardner, 1978, McCannon, 1973). Recognition that learning needs are likely to be secondary to needs for belonging, love, and self-esteem suggests that a focus on needs that may supercede or conflict with perseverance or success in an academic environment may be important (Borgen & Knight, 1983; Palola, 1983; Schlossberg, 1984). Orientation programs that go beyond dissemination of information to an incorporation of training focused on attitude and skill change have met with some success (Bloom, 1971; Del Prete & Waterhouse, 1972; Gardner, 1978; Haverkamp, 1983).

In conclusion, then, preventive intervention in counselling is a movement away from a treatment focus to a focus on anticipatory guidance aimed at increasing self-efficacy. Efforts to assist "normal" people with the information and coping skills deemed useful in reducing or eliminating problems associated with transitional or other potentially stressful experiences are seen as theoretically sound and empirically useful. Orientation programs for students entering an educational program may, consequently, be usefully designed as a preventive intervention.

Chapter Summary

Although the early developmental stage of evaluation as a formal method of systematic inquiry precludes analysis on the basis of empirical findings regarding the success of various models, there has been a clear trend away from a measurement and outcome approach to approaches that incorporate multiple perspectives on process as well as outcome variables. This movement in evaluation foreshadowed a similar movement in counselling research where there has been an increasing de-emphasis on quantitative over qualitative data and of outcome over process variables. A convergence in the goals of counselling research and evaluation has occurred with the increasing focus of counselling research on research that has direct relevance to clinical questions and on research dealing with problems within natural settings.

The attrition problem identified at Athabasca University gave rise to the development of two exploratory counselling interventions. Literature on adult student concerns, on effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of communication media, on counselling approaches appropriate to the problem, the population and counselling staff, and on issues related to maximizing use of counselling by target populations was reviewed. The review supported the conclusion that preventive programs aimed at increasing student awareness of the institution, of themselves, and of coping strategies to enhance their competencies for being successful as students would incorporate important elements for making the transition to student life. A problem-oriented rather than theory-oriented approach appeared to offer a reasonable prospect of effective intervention.

Evaluation of such a "package" program through a multi-perspective comprehensive process and outcome approach advocated by Michael Scriven promised to serve the formative evaluation needs of a dismantling and reconstructive approach to counselling research as well as to serve the summative evaluation needs of the host institution.

Chapter III

Program Development

The task of developing an effective intervention program required that attention be given to many complex and interacting issues. The program was designed (a) to focus on common, remediable concerns of a diverse student population, (b) to maximize student utilization and acceptance, (c) to be presentable within the context and constraints of distance education, and (d) to be feasible within the realities of staff resources and institutional policies and procedures. The program devised that attempted to meet these criteria was an orientation program available on a voluntary basis to new admissions and presented within the first month of admission either by mail through a self-instructional guidebook and audio-cassette or through counsellor-facilitated group workshops available on site in regional centres having available counselling staff.

Determining the common needs of students at Athabasca University involved analyzing and combining a large body of information on university student needs (Gilmore, 1981; Lenning, Beal, and Sauer, 1980; Widick, Kefelkamp & Parker, 1981), on adult student needs (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Cross, 1981; Fenske, 1981; Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1970; Knox, 1977; Maehr & Kleiber, 1981) and on distance university students characteristics (Baath, 1982; Daniel & Marquis, 1979; Murgatroyd & Redmond, 1978; Nicolson, 1977; Thornton & Mitchell, 1978) with the clinical and empirical information available on the specific needs of Athabasca University students (Coldeway, Spencer, & Stringer, 1980; Shale, 1982; Paul, 1981). A synthesis of this information indicated there would be value in designing an early preventive intervention to address concerns at the point when they surface (Haverkamp, 1983; Thorpe, 1978; Tough, 1971) and in designing a program focused on increasing awareness (a) of the nature of the task undertaken, (b) of the student's readiness to undertake this task, and (c) of the potential resources available to assist in dealing with essentially normal transitional concerns (Drum & Figler, 1976; Kanfer, 1975; Karoly; 1982; Kessler & Albee, 1975; Lecomte, Dumont & Zingle, 1981; Maccoby, 1980; Meichenbaum, 1979; Nadler, 1983; Schlossberg, 1984).

Program Model

The program contents may be described within the framework of an adapted version of Haverkamp's (1980, 1983) model of an orientation program. This model includes a focus on the academic institution, understanding self, and developing skills for learning. The program developed for this study included the following components, (a) the nature of the academic institution, (b) understanding self in relation to institutional requirements, and (c) development of awareness of needed skills and of resources for acquiring skills.

The first component, the academic institution, included information on Athabasca University's distance educational system, student population, and institutional resources available to students. The second component, understanding self in relation to institutional requirements, included information and exercises designed to make possible assessment of personal and situational strengths and weaknesses in terms of the demands and constraints of a distance university program and assessment of the impact that a return to student life might have on lifestyle, as that lifestyle reflects personal priorities and role responsibilities. The third component, development of awareness of needed skills and of resources for acquiring skills, included information and exercises focused on planning and communication with significant others, efficient learning and study skills, and motivation maintenance skills.

Design of programs that attempted to maximize the possibility of being seen by students as useful and minimize the possibility of being seen as threatening (Ames, 1983; Fisher, Winer, & Abramowitz, 1983; Jeffrey, 1974; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980; Nadler, 1983; Rodin, 1982; Sarason, 1977) was viewed as essential for both therapeutic as well as administrative reasons. Although there is some evidence that participation in counselling, advising and orientation programs may be associated with increased student achievement (Bloom, 1971; Gardener, 1978; Thorpe, 1978) and persistence (Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980) there is also evidence that only a small proportion of students (Haverkamp, 1983) use student support services.

Studies on help-seeking behavior suggest that interventions that are (a) pro-active (Shapiro, 1983; Krings, 1976; McDaniel, 1969), (b) focused on issues clearly identified as typical concerns of the target population (Danish & D'Augelli, 1980; Nadler, 1983)-and (c) presented as issues that are within a person's competence to resolve - either by themselves or with some external assistance (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Kanfer, 1975; Richards, 1978; Rodin, 1982; Roskies & Lazarus, 1980; Meichenbaum, 1983) run a relatively low risk of being perceived as threatening or embarrassing (Ames, 1983; Janoff-Bulman & Brickman, 1982; Nadler, 1983; Shapiro, 1983) and consequently may achieve a relatively high rate of utilization.

From an administrative perspective, the possibility of attracting students to the programs developed on a voluntary basis precluded making such programs compulsory. Within the open admission philosophy of Athabasca University, proposals for compulsory admission procedures had generally been met with resistance and could be expected to meet resistance in the future unless a strong case for an effective outcome for a program could be documented. Attention to the appeal of the programs to the target population was consequently of value.

Program Description

The design of a program that could be presented within the context of a distance university such as Athabasca University required a program that could be made available to students living anywhere in Canada. While a single distance program would satisfy the requirements of accessibility to the entire student body, such a program would fail to capitalize on the benefits of face-to-face interaction (Arbeiter, Aslanian, Schmerbeck, &

Brickell, 1978; Dilley, 1971; Moore, 1981; Singer, 1981) for students and staff who preferred this medium and who were geographically accessible. Two programs were consequently developed.

One program consisted of a self-instructional guidebook (Fisher, 1975; Forrer, 1974; Moran & Croker, 1981; Packard, 1968; Swain, 1976) with an accompanying audio-cassette (Golddiamond, 1976; Logan, Fuller, & Denehy, 1976). The text written for the home-study guidebook "A Package of Shoelaces" is given in Appendix E. The transcript of the audio-cassette (as well as the video tape), *Telling It Like It Is*, is in Appendix F.

The second program developed was a four-hour group workshop (Hartmen, 1979; Levy, 1977; Loughary & Hopson, 1979). The length of the workshop was based on the presumed value of providing a workshop (a) that would be utilized by students with heavy time commitments, (b) which could be provided outside of typical working hours (i.e., either during an evening or on a weekend), (c) which was sufficiently long to have some impact on students, and (d) which could be provided frequently during heavy enrollment periods. An *Instructor's Guide* (see Appendix F) was written to assist counsellors in central and regional offices in leading orientation workshops in their districts.

Video and Audio Cassette Production

A video and audio tape, *Telling It Like It Is*, was produced to provide a stimulus to student self-assessment as well as to provide modeling of successful coping strategies (Bandura, 1971; Hasford & Mills; 1983, Kunce, Brush, & Thelan, 1974). The format covered student's assessment of their choice of Athabasca University as well as modeling of "covert coping strategies and overt achievement skills" suggested by Kunce, Brush, & Thelan (1974) following Bandura (1971) and Meichenbaum (1971, 1979). These guidelines include the following elements: (a) model openly expresses difficulty or uncertainties about problems faced, (b) model verbalizes determination to deal with the problem, (c) model describes critical components in reaching goal, (d) model makes self-rewarding statements and exhibits positive effect for successful coping efforts.

To enhance the effectiveness of this learning approach, models having demographic characteristics similar to a large proportion of Athabasca University students were used (Hosford & Mills, 1983), models having different approaches to accomplishing their goals were chosen to facilitate identification and demonstrate the need for individualized problem-solving (Bandura, 1971) , and cueing or directed observation was used in both the workshop and the guidebook (Kunce, Brush & Thelan, 1974).

The focus of the two programs was on similar content aimed at achieving similar goals. An outline of each, presented briefly, illustrates the approach used in the programs. A pilot run of both programs was completed prior to conducting the field test for the evaluation project.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

(See Appendix G for the Instructors Guide to the Workshop)

9:00 - 9:15 Welcome
Housekeeping details
Introductions - participants & staff

9:15 - 9:30 Review Athabasca University structure and resources
Review Athabasca University student and adult student characteristics

9:30 - 10:00 Videotape, *Telling It Like It Is*

10:00 - 10:15 Self-assessment exercise

10:15 - 10:30 Small group exercise: Share views on strengths and potential concerns relating to returning to school

10:30 - 10:45 Coffee break

10:45 - 11:20 Small groups bring to large groups their shared lists of strengths and concerns

11:20 - 11:50 Discussion and exercise on impact on lifestyle

11:50 - 12:20 Discussion and lecturette on learning and study skills

12:20 - 12:50 Discussion and exercise on stress inoculation

12:50 - 1:00 Wrap-up and evaluation forms. Individual question time.

HOME-STUDY FORMAT

(See Appendix E for the text of the Orientation Guidebook)

Introduction: Welcome to Athabasca University

Chapter 1: Review of Athabasca University system and resources

Chapter 2: Review of Athabasca University student and adult student characteristics

Chapter 3: Self-assessment
Audio-tape, *Telling It Like It Is*
Self-assessment exercises

Chapter 4: Review of life-style changes required by a return to education.
The Week That Was/The Week That Is To Be exercise

Chapter 5: Review of learning and study skills
Focus on need for consideration of time, place and skills

Chapter 6: Review of need for self-maintenance of motivation
Introduction to stress inoculation

Evaluation questionnaire
Appendices:

A Student Service Staff Profile
B Supplementary Reading Materials List
C Techniques of Study
D Using Libraries
E Stress Management Skills: Self-modification For Adjustment

Chapter IV

Methodology

In this chapter a description is presented of an evaluation approach advocated by Scriven (1974) for assessing program effectiveness.

Program Evaluation Model

Scriven's evaluation model was chosen for this study because it was seen as having merit for the task of analyzing program effectiveness and worth in terms of the various audiences or consumers of this evaluation. It's merit lies in adding to the outcome measurements of research design a consideration of additional information relevant to staff and administrators involved in making decisions on program change and program support. This additional information includes explicit emphasis on (a) analysis of process, a step critical to dismantling or constructive approaches to outcome research, (b) consideration of side effects, which may be as important as the main effect, (c) consideration of cost, a factor of increasing importance as educational budgets diminish, and (d) consideration of clinical judgment as a valued criterion, a consideration that includes those judgments that are the *sine qua non* of clinical practice. While many evaluation approaches include some of the foregoing factors to some degree, Scriven's model has persuasive appeal at a time when counselling research is undergoing a movement away from controlled analogy research design (Kazdin, 1983). The appeal stems from the use of experimental design as a criterion having a high priority within the evaluation scheme, and the emphasis on an integration of clinical and outcome data.

The evaluation model was adapted to fit the characteristics of the problem and the institutional setting involved. Each of the thirteen dimensions or criteria will be described and information sources used in this study to provide data on those dimensions will be given. The process used in acquiring this information will also be described when appropriate. Finally, the procedure for synthesizing and rating the data on the thirteen dimensions according to Scriven's "Product Evaluation Profile" will be outlined.

Evaluation process. Acceptable evidence on the following thirteen dimensions is necessary, according to this model, to judge program effectiveness. The first two dimensions, need and market, are considered preconditions to program development. Expenditure of resources on program development is seen as unjustified unless acceptable evidence is provided that these preconditions have been met. Dimensions 3 through 10 are "performance criteria"; they include information on process and outcome measures on the consumers of the program, on critical competitors of the program, on long-term effects, on side effects, on processes involved in the program, on causation of effects, and on statistical analysis of effects. Dimension 11, educational (or practical) significance, is a synthesis of items 3 through 10. Dimension 12 involves estimation of costs and cost-effectiveness. Dimension 13 is a consideration of the extended support available to a program.

-Dimension 1 is the *need* or justification for using resources to develop a program.

This consists of the determination of whether there is a genuine need for the program. It addresses the question of whether there is a defensible social or economic need that may be serviced by the program. This is not equivalent to the rationale for research, i.e., a determination that a study may help close a gap in knowledge regardless of any foreseeable application of the knowledge gained. This a precondition to program development.

Scriven proposes that among other factors, consideration should be given to (a) number affected, (b) social significance, (c) absence of substitutes, and (d) multiplicative effects. Rating of need is made according to the following 5-point scale: 0, No good evidence of significant need; 1, Possibly significant need; 2, Probably significant need; 3, Great importance; 4, Maximum priority - a desperate need.

Sources of information used included the attrition rates and concerns related to attrition within Athabasca University and a review of literature on attrition as its relates to the transitional needs of adult learners.

Dimension 2 is the assurance that a *market* does, in fact, exist for a proposed program. In Scriven's view the design of a program, no matter how theoretically elegant is unjustified unless one assures beforehand such pragmatic issues as whether there exists (a) a demonstrably reachable market, as opposed to the market assumed to need the program and (b) present or foreseeable resources that would be required if the program evaluation is positive.

Scriven proposes that, among other factors, consideration should be given to (a) the clarity, feasibility, ingenuity, and economy of the dissemination or marketing plan, (b) size of the market, and (c) importance of the market. Rating of market is made according to the following 5-point scale: 0, Inadequate evidence to suggest that a significant market will be reached; 1, Possible, but not probable, that a significant market will be reached; 2, Significant market will probably be reached; 3, Large and/or important market will be reached; 4, Very large and/or very important market will be reached.

Sources of information used to obtain evidence on this dimension included (a) student demand for the pilot run of the programs as well as for the field trial, (b) student evaluations of the programs, and (c) Athabasca University plans for staffing Regional Offices in Alberta.

Dimension 3 is a *true field trial*. This criterion requires a field trial that refers to (a) the final version of the program (for summative evaluation), (b) typical users and staff members who are conducting the program, (c) an absence of involvement by the program developer or any special assistance, and (d) the typical setting and time-frame in which the program will be used. Scriven warns that this checkpoint is rarely achieved due to deadlines, over-commitment and under-financing. The predicted deficiences will be evident in this study on point (c) which calls for the absence of the program developer in the trial run of the program.

In the case under study, the program developer also held primary responsibility for conducting the programs. The criterion was partially met, however, in that the program developer will probably be a principal user in the foreseeable future.

The factors considered in assessing this dimension are whether the field trial used (a) the final version of the programs, (b) typical users, (c) typical aids, (d) typical setting, and (e) typical time frames for which the program is proposed. Rating of the field trial is made according to the following 5-point scale: 0, Relevance unclear; 1, Serious weakness; 2, Reasonable bet for generalization; 3, Minor differences; 4, Perfectly typical.

The source of information used as evidence for meeting the criteria required for this dimension was the field trial of both programs from September 1 through November 30, 1984 in the Northern Regional Office of Athabasca University. The programs were carried out within a typical time frame, setting, and with a typical student population. The program developer was also the workshop leader.

Dimension 4 required that attention be directed toward obtaining the evaluation perspectives of all program *consumers*. "Consumers" in this context, is defined broadly as any group or individual the program "is addressed to, commissioned by, and - regardless of these two considerations - responsible to" (Scriven, 1974, p.14). The consumers have, for the purpose of this study, been defined as students and prospective students of Athabasca University as well as groups within the University who were expected to be involved in direct use of the programs (Student Service staff), those responsible for supporting the cost of future revisions of the programs (administrators), and those who have variable direct and indirect impact on the support given to Student Service programs (i.e., academic staff and tutors).

The intent of this dimension is to include consideration not only of the obvious consumers, i.e., the subjects or program participants, but also others who are concerned with program effects. These consumers vary according to the nature of the program evaluated but might include taxpayers, students, counsellors, administrators, and government agencies.

Rating of evidence that the consumer views have been obtained is made on the following 5-point scale: 0, Only speculation about the most important "consumer"; 1, Weak data on the most important "consumer"; 2, Good data on the most important "consumer"; 3, Fair data on all relevant "consumers"; 4, Full data on all relevant "consumers".

Sources of information used to obtain evidence on consumer perspectives were records on the entry characteristics of students in each of the groups studied, participant evaluations of the programs, and a survey of a representative sample of Athabasca University administrative, academic, and tutorial staff views on program content and effectiveness.

Dimension 5, *crucial comparisons*, addresses the question of whether the program being evaluated is being compared with possible alternative programs or "critical competitors". The question of whether one could achieve better results with less expense should ideally be known or, at minimum, be estimated.

Assessment of whether adequate evidence on this dimension has been obtained requires that comparative assessment be made with competitive programs that are hypothesized, created, projected, or existing or that program effectiveness is compared with a no-treatment group. Rating of evidence on crucial competitors is made on the following 5-point scale: 0, Little or no useful comparative data; 1, Lacking data on some of the more important competitors; 2, Fair data on the most important competitors; 3, Good data on the most important competitor(s); 4, Good data on all important competitors.

This study examines the development of two new programs which do not replace an existing program. These two programs are compared to each other as critical competitors and compared as well to the previous alternative available, that of individual counselling.

Sources of information used to obtain data on crucial comparisons included comparison of the process and efficacy of the two programs developed through surveys of student response, through expert judge assessment, and through comparison of outcome measures using a quasi-experimental design, a survey of literature and of Canadian universities to determine the nature and availability of alternative orientation programs, and comparative costs of the two programs developed for this study.

Dimension 6 calls for evidence of *long-term* program effects. Long term performance criteria are seen as highly desirable and often crucial. These measurable outcomes may be difficult to obtain, especially in the case of short-term programs, but are highly valued when available.

Scriven suggests that the search for long-term effects take into account those occurring anywhere from a week later to many years later. Effects may be measured by a variety of outcome measures as discussed on other performance dimensions. Rating of evidence on long-term effects is made on the following 5 point scale: 0, Useless or no follow-up; no other grounds for inferring long-term effects; 1, Follow up or other data suggests a conclusion about effects when needed; 2, Follow-up gives reasonable support to a conclusion about effects when needed; 3, Some direct evidence about the effects at times needed; 4, Good direct evidence about the effects at times needed.

Sources of information used to obtain data on long-term effects included (a) a three month follow-up questionnaire on student preparedness, (b) a five month follow-up interview covering student experiences with their courses and (c) a 10 to 12 month follow-up of course progress and course completion. The questionnaire was a mailed survey, the interviews were done by two independent interviewers who had training in the use of a semi-structured interview format. Course progress and completion data were taken from Registry records. (See Appendices P, U and discussion of results in Chapter V for further detail on procedures used.)

Dimension 7 requires that *side* or *unintended* program effects be assessed. Scriven argues that these effects may at times be more important than the main effects. An independent search for side effects is recommended both to avoid bias as well as to enhance the search for unintended effects by having an objective perspective in observing effects. This is the basis of the goal-free evaluation approach put forward by Scriven as having considerable merit in summative evaluation.

Scriven proposes that the rating of the search for side effects consider whether this search was (a) comprehensive, (b) skilled, (c) independent, (d) goal-free, and (e) conducted on process as well as outcome variables. Rating of the search for side effects is made according to the following 5-point scale: 0, No worthwhile study; 1, Some study made, but incomplete; 2, Barely acceptable; 3, Generally good; 4, Meets all requirements well.

Sources of information used to obtain evidence on this dimension were (a) open-ended questions on self-report questionnaires sent to the students in the third month of their course (see Appendix P), (b) a survey of a sample of University administrative and academic staff to determine their views on possible goals achieved other than those to which the programs were directed (see Appendix N), (c) interviews with counsellors who participated as workshop leaders prior to, and subsequent to, this study, and (d) examination of the entry characteristics of participating students.

Dimension 8, *process*, requires observation and evaluation of the program components which substantiates or invalidates the claim of performing a described process. While a detailed description of the program should provide sufficient detail for independent observers to judge the process, this should be combined with other evidence such as expert judges of the process and observations of program effects.

Assessment of evidence on this dimension should include consideration of (a) descriptive congruence, (b) casual clues, (c) outcome measurement instrument validity, (c) judge-observer reliability, and (e) observations that suggest any positive or negative overall effects on those involved. Rating of evidence on process is made on the following 5-point scale: 0, Inadequate; 1, Significant omission(s); 2, Reasonable risk; 3, Appears satisfactory; 4, Passes with flying colors.

Sources of information used to supply evidence on this dimension were (a) program descriptions (see Chapter III and Appendices E, F, and G), (b) student response to components of each program (see Appendices K and L), (c) "Expert judge" evaluations of program effectivenesses in reaching outcomes (see Appendix N), (d) evaluation of program process by external reviewers. Some evaluations of the home-study program were elicited at a conference for "Counselling in Distance Universities" in Cambridge, England, in October 1982. Some were obtained through word-of-mouth within Alberta and British Columbia post-secondary institutions. Another was obtained by reference in *Stress Inoculation Training* (Meichenbaum, 1985) to the section of the program having to do with stress inoculation training.

Dimension 9, *causation*, calls for a demonstration that program effects reported cannot reasonably be attributed to influences other than the program. Scriven views controlled experimental design as the strongest alternative in satisfying this criterion.

The source of information used as evidence of causation was a quasi-experimental design conducted to determine whether either of the two programs developed was effective in increasing the course completer or "start" rate for entering Athabasca University students registering in the Northern Regional Office between September 1 and November 30, 1984. Because the long-term effects of a short-term program could be masked by many events occurring subsequent to that program, a search was also made for evidence of short-term measures related to the long-term measurement of completion. Evidence that "non-starts" or students who show no evidence of beginning their courses constitute a major proportion of non-completing students (Shale, 1982) suggests that increasing the number of students who start their course work may be viewed as a first step in the direction of preventing attrition and may be evidence that the program has served a purpose in assisting students past the "induction crisis" (Daniel, & Marquis, 1979). Further evaluation efforts might then be usefully directed at what occurs after this initial period.

The question asked in this portion of this study was whether there would be a significant difference between the treatment groups or between either of the two groups and the no-program comparison group in the proportion of students showing evidence of starting their course work (as demonstrated by a course mark appearing on the student record system) or of completing their course work.

Selection of subjects was made by random division of all new Athabasca University students registering at the University's Northern Regional Office during the months of September, October, and November of 1984 into three groups. Group A, the home-study treatment group, received invitations to obtain a home-study orientation program. Group B, the workshop treatment group, received invitations to attend an orientation workshop. Group C, the no-program comparison group, received no invitation. Each group had an N of 162. From Group A, 34 (20.99 percent) volunteered to participate in a home study orientation program. From Group B, 35 (21.66 percent) volunteered to participate in a workshop program. From Group C a random selection of 35 students was chosen as the no-treatment comparison group. Because of the possible volunteer bias in groups A and B, each group was compared on characteristics previously found to be related to completion rates, i.e., age, educational background, and gender (AU Trends, 1985). The groups were also compared on the basis of length of time since last enrolled in formal education. This last comparison was made on the assumption that being out of school for long periods may be positively related to greater uncertainty or stress in the process of getting started on a university program. If such a comparison showed the experimental and comparison groups to be equivalent on these characteristics the threat of a volunteer bias in favor of higher completion rates for the experimental groups would be reduced.

The following treatment procedure was used. Each participant in the home-study treatment group A was sent an Orientation Guidebook with the accompanying audio cassette, *Telling It Like It is*, and a booklet on relaxation procedures. Each participant in the workshop treatment group B was registered in an orientation workshop. Four workshops were held in the Northern Regional Office of Athabasca University, two in September, one in October, and one in November 1984. The receipt of the home-study program and the availability of a workshop were timed so as to be available to each subject within the first month of their course. Workshops were held in a comfortable conference room. The investigator served as the workshop leader on each of the four occasions on which the workshop was given. The home-study orientation program was mailed within a day or two of receiving a telephone or mail request.

Anonymous evaluation forms (see Appendices H and J) were included in the Orientation Guidebook and were given to workshop participants at the end of each workshop. These evaluation forms included numerical ratings of the programs on a number of dimensions related to the content of the workshop as well as including open-ended questions. These permitted a comparison of the two programs in terms of student response to the content of each program.

A second questionnaire (Appendix P) was sent to subjects in each experimental group as well as the no-treatment comparison group in the third month following registration. In addition, a random sample of each group was interviewed at approximately the fifth month following registration. Interviews were completed by trained interviewers. The questionnaire and interview format were designed to elicit (a) students perception of how well informed they were about Athabasca University's instructional system when they first began their course work, (b) information on current course progress, and (c) self-report assessments of student awareness and perceived capacity to cope with the concerns of adult distance university students that had been addressed in the experimental orientation programs. The last measures obtained were Registry students records containing course progress and course completion data. Tests of statistical significance were done on course progress and course completion data.

Scriven proposed that the search for causation consider factors related to the strength of the experimental design, i.e., whether the search is based on appropriate interpretation of data or on an appropriate quasi-experimental or experimental design. Rating of evidence on causation is made on the following scale: 0, Hopeless bet; 1, Weak bet; 2, Plausible bet; 3, Good bet; 4, Impeccable.

Dimension 10, *statistical analysis,* is seen in this evaluation model as the single desirable quantitative criterion which is, nevertheless, regarded as worthless unless accompanied by assessment of educational or practical significance as judged in Dimension 13. It is argued that lack of statistical significance may be compensated for by expert judgment that useful gains have been made toward meeting real needs.

Assessment of evidence provided on statistical significance should include consideration of whether an appropriate statistical test was applied and whether an appropriate significance level was found. Rating of this dimension is based on the following 5-point scale: 0, Not shown to be significant; 1, Marginal significance; 2, Reasonably significant; 3, High significance - well-tested; 4, Flawless analysis, astronomical significance.

The source of information used to determine statistical significance was based on using a chi square test to compare two or more independent proportions obtained from dichotomous data (as described in Ferguson, 1971).

Dimension 11, *educational* (or practical) *significance,* is a synthesis of evidence presented on dimensions 1 - 10. This process requires that judgments be made on all the evidence presented which indicate whether or not gains have been made in meeting the needs identified in Dimension 1. A means of providing a rating of evidence and a synthesis of evidence is provided by Scriven's Product Evaluation Profile.

Assessment of evidence on educational significance should include consideration not only of the presence but the direction and strength of the evidence presented on need, market, field trial, consumers, crucial comparisons, long-term effects, side effects, process, causation, and statistical significance. Considerations should include issues related to the strength and comprehensiveness of the evidence presented. Rating of this dimension is based on the ratings given on items 1 - 10 and is made on the following 5-point scale: 0, No significance demonstrated; 1, Low significance demonstrated; 2, Moderate significance demonstrated; 3, High significance demonstrated; 4, Very high significance demonstrated.

Sources of information used to assess evidence of educational (or practical) significance of program effects are those provided on Dimensions 1 through 10.

Dimension 12, *cost and cost-effectiveness*, involves obtaining costs of developing and maintaining the programs. Costs relative to the program gains achieved and relative to possible alternative programs must be estimated. Since estimation of costs is subject to bias and is a difficult technical task for which most evaluators are not trained, Scriven recommends that a cost analysis be done by an independent accountant if funds permit. Funds, in this case, did not permit. Estimation of relative costs were, however, considered and presented.

Scriven recommends that presentation of evidence on costs should include consideration of whether cost analysis has included (a) costs for all competitors, (b) independent judgment of costs, (c) expert judgment of costs, and (e) a comprehensive cost analysis. Rating on cost-effectiveness is made according to the following 5-point scale: 0, Apparently excessive for comparable products, or data inadequate; 1, Probably high for comparable products, or somewhat incomplete data; 2, Reasonable for comparable products; 3, Significantly lower than comparable products; 4, Breakthrough for comparable products.

Sources of information used to obtain evidence on this dimension included a comparison of staff and materials costs for the two programs developed as well as for the alternative of individual counselling sessions.

Dimension 13, *extended support*, is considered a desirable rather than a necessary item by Scriven. Recent evaluation emphasis on the political aspects of insuring a responsive audience for evaluative results suggests a higher value be placed on this checkpoint than is emphasized in Scriven's model.

Evidence presented on the availability of extended support should include consideration of whether there exists a post marketing system for program improvement and further data collection, a plan for updating program materials, in-service training for staff users, and plans for new uses of the program.

Rating of extended support is based on the following 6-point scale: 0, Negligible - apparently none; 1, Weak - less than adequate; 2, Minimally acceptable; 3, Good and fairly comprehensive; 4, Excellent and comprehensive.

Sources of information used to obtain evidence of extended support included (a) budget submissions for program updating, (b) involvement of administrative judgment in program development and program assessment, (c) in-service training of counselling staff as workshop leaders, (d) plans for evaluation reports, and (e) plans for extending the use of the workshop groups for peer-support.

The Product Evaluation Profile. A summary rating of the presence and quality of evidence on each of the thirteen dimensions specified in this evaluation model provides the concluding synthesis of information as well as the final judgment of program effectiveness. The Product Evaluation Profile (Figure 1) is suggested as a means of plotting these ratings. Scriven argues that an adequate evaluation requires a rating of 2 (acceptable) on all dimensions. Judgment of ratings would typically be based on debate among a number of informed evaluators.

Figure 1

Product Profile Evaluation

Dimensions	Achievement Score			
Need				
Market				
Field trial				
True consumer				
Comparisons				
Long-term				
Side effects				
Process				
Causation				
Statistical significance				
Educational significance				
Cost				
Support				
	0 .5	1 1.5	2 2.5	3 3.5 4

Note: From "Evaluation Perspectives and Procedures" by M. Scriven. In W.J. Popham (Ed.) 1974, Evaluation in Education: Current Applications. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing.

Chapter V

Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether a counselling intervention appropriate to Athabasca University could be designed which would assist students in the pursuit of their educational goals and which would assist the University in understanding the reasons for attrition. Two preventive programs, available to students either through self-instructional home-study materials or through workshops held in regional offices, were developed. Evaluation of the programs was based on an approach suggested by Michael Scriven (1974). In this chapter results of that evaluation are presented.

Judgment of a program, according to Scriven's evaluation approach, depends both on the adequacy of the information gathering process and on the weighting or valuing of that information in terms of its support or non-support of the program in question. The first section of this chapter, on population, process, and outcome results, includes descriptions of the questionnaires, interviews and student record information used as a basis for the summaries in the second section. The second section of this chapter contains summaries of information obtained on each of the thirteen dimensions deemed essential to good evaluation in Scriven's approach and includes as well judgments made on both the adequacy of the information gathering process and the direction of the evidence provided in terms of its support of the programs.

Population, Process, and Outcome Results

The evaluation approach used for this study required that information be obtained on a wide variety of process and outcome variables. Emphasis is placed on judgments of important consumers (i.e. those conducting and funding the programs as well as those participating in it) as well as on measurable outcomes. Information on these variables was obtained through examination of relevant literature, internal documents and discussions with Athabasca University staff, Athabasca University student records, and a series of questionnaires addressed to participating students and Athabasca University "expert judges" as well as interviews with a sample of students in the experimental and comparison groups.

This section contains the results of (a) a search for the entry characteristics of students in each of the experimental programs and no-program comparison groups, (b) participant evaluation of the experimental home-study and workshop programs, (c) "expert judge" assessment of student needs and of program effectiveness, (d) a questionnaire mailed to students in experimental programs and the no-program comparison group at three months following registration, (e) interviews held approximately five months following registration with a random sample of students in the experimental program and no-program comparison groups, and (f) a search of Athabasca University student records for data on course progress and course completion for the experimental and comparison groups.

Entry characteristics The voluntary nature of the participation in the programs gave importance to determination of the characteristics of the participating populations for two reasons: the first to shed light on which students were likely to use the programs if offered on a voluntary basis, and the second to see how similar or different the experimental and comparison groups were on presumed relevant characteristics.

Table 3

Characteristics of Students in the Experimental Home-Study and Workshop Orientation Programs and in the No-Program Comparison Group

Characteristics	No-Program Group N=35	Home-Study Group N=34	Workshop Group N=35	Combined Home-Study and Workshop Group N=69
Mean Age	29	34	35	34.5
Educational background (% of group)				
-Some university or completed degree	25.6	41.9	12.9	27.4
-Other post-secondary education	32.3	19.3	38.7	29.0
-Senior matriculation	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7
-High school diploma	12.9	22.6	19.3	21.0
-Less than HS diploma	19.3	6.4	19.3	12.9
Gender (% of group)				
-Women	51.6	42.6	77.2	60.0
-Men	48.5	57.4	22.6	40.0
Time since last enrollment in formal education (% of group)				
-Within last 5 years	64.5	48.4	25.8	37.1
-6 to 10 years	12.9	19.3	19.3	19.3
-11 to 15 years	9.7	19.3	25.8	22.6
-16 to 20 years	.1	6.4	9.7	8.1
-Over 21 years	6.4	6.4	19.3	12.9

Examination of the characteristics of students participating in the home-study and the workshop orientation program indicated that each program attracted different types of students. Table 3 reveals that participants in each program were of similar age but differed in educational background, gender, and time lapse since last enrolled in formal education. The home-study group in contrast with the workshop group had a higher incidence of students who (a) had university background (41.9 compared with 12.9 percent), (b) were men (57.4 compared with 22.6 percent), and (c) had been enrolled in a formal educational program more recently (48.4 compared to 25.8 percent within the previous five years). With these differences, it seemed clear that the programs were not, by and large, competitors for the same population of students within the urban area studied. Participant response to the two programs consequently had to be viewed as coming from non-comparable groups and analysis of the results of the two programs required cognizance of the group differences. The higher educational background of the home-study group was seen as especially relevant to course outcome results because of the strong predictive association between previous education and current academic success. The differences found in the program populations were also important to formative evaluation regarding future program focus and applicability. The relatively high proportion of men participating in the home-study program (57.4 percent from an overall Athabasca University population having a 39 - 61 percent male - female split) suggested that this program was more acceptable to male students than was the workshop program which attracted only 22.6 percent male students. The workshop program, by contrast, attracted a high proportion of women (77.4 percent) who had a lower educational background than either the home-study or comparison group.

Comparability of experimental and the comparison groups gives credence to the assumption that differences in outcome measures are due to program effects rather than differences in population. A difficulty with voluntary participation is the possibility of volunteer bias effects. The direction of bias has usually been assumed to favor the experimental participants (e.g., they are more motivated, more active problem-solvers, more willing to use resources). The legitimacy of using a comparison rather than a true control group rests partially on a demonstration that volunteer bias' were not unduly influential in determining outcome results. In this case, examination of the characteristics of each group (Table 3) suggested there was a mixture of positive and negative volunteer bias effects. The high educational level of the home-study group as contrasted with the comparison group favored the home-study group; the lower educational level of the workshop group constituted a source of negative bias for this group. Combining the two experimental groups led to equalizing the opposing bias on this characteristic for the two groups so that the combined experimental groups were similar to the comparison group on educational background.

Uncertainty regarding the effects of gender on outcome left information regarding volunteer bias on this factor unknown. It was noted, however, that combining the two experimental groups led to a male - female ratio of 40 - 60, essentially the same ratio as existed in the Athabasca University student body. Combining the two experimental groups then made the experimental groups comparable to the comparison group on gender ratio.

Differences found between the experimental groups and the comparison group on time since last enrollment in formal education appeared to be a substantial difference. Both experimental groups had been absent from formal education for longer periods than the comparison group, the workshop group showing the longest period since previous formal educational experience with only 25.8 percent having been in school within the previous five years and 19.3 percent having been out of school for over 21 years. While the relationship between time away from school and academic success, particularly in a distance education context, was unknown, it seemed reasonable to postulate that lack of recent experience was likely to be positively related to greater uncertainty and anxiety in facing a return to school. If volunteer bias based on time away from formal education existed then, it was likely to be a negative bias for both experimental groups.

Evaluation of entry characteristics, then, indicated that the home-study and workshop groups were different but in combination were comparable to the randomly selected no-program group in educational background, gender and age. The experimental program groups were different from the no-program comparison group in that the experimental groups had been absent from formal education for longer periods of time. This latter characteristic may have been a negative bias for the combined experimental groups.

Participant evaluation of the home-study and workshop programs. Reactions to the home-study and workshop orientation programs were obtained through evaluation questionnaires (Appendices H and J) given to participants as part of the home-study materials or at the close of the workshops. The response rate for the anonymous mail-in home-study program evaluations was 71 percent. The response rate for the workshops was 100 percent. (The total N for workshop evaluations is larger than the sample N because students outside the sample attended workshops during the experimental period.) The response given by participants in both programs were generally positive and indicated they found the programs useful. Responses to questions regarding acquisition of new information, increased awareness that was useful for effective planning, and specific skills, approachs or techniques applicable to planning a return to school are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Evaluation of the Home-Study
and Workshop Orientation Programs

Evaluation Questions	Home-Study Group	Workshop Group
	(Percent response)	
"To what degree do you feel you have received each of the following from this workshop (Guidebook)?"		
(a) Increased awareness that will assist you in planning more effectively for returning to school		
3 to a large extent	42	66
2 to some extent	58	34
1 very little	–	–
(b) Specific skills, approaches and techniques that you may want to consider applying		
3 to a large extent	42	55
2 to some extent	58	45
1 very little	–	–
(c) New information which will be useful in planning for university		
3 to a large extent	34	36
2 to some extent	58	55
1 very little	8	9
"The workshop (Guidebook) has been in meeting my needs."		
4 excellent	30	44
3 good	65	56
2 fair	–	–
1 poor	5	–

The workshop participants responded somewhat more positively than the home-study participants. All but one participant in both groups reported that the programs had been "excellent" or "good" in meeting their needs. The exception giving a response of "poor" felt the program was not useful for someone already having a university degree. All participants indicated they would recommend the program to a colleague or friend who was considering registration at Athabasca University. Response to the open-ended questions that made up the remainder of the evaluation questionnaires (Appendices K and L) indicated that each part of the orientation process, i.e., information about the institutional requirements, self-assessment, and development of coping skills, received substantial attention by participants. Quotations from the evaluation questionnaires are illustrative of the responses given:

> The guidebook gives some help and some pointers I found useful. It also warns of problems that may be encountered. It seems good that the book gives both suggestions for success and tell of problems that one may face too.
>
> I have found this guidebook to be very helpful in pointing out the realities of studying at a correspondence university. The guidebook helps you to identify many problems that you are likely to encounter as a student, and it suggests ways of overcoming these problems in order to get the most benefit out of studying. The quidebook has helped me in several ways, it has clearly pointed out just what an undertaking a university education is, it has indicated what is exactly required to be a successful student and helped me in deciding whether I have the ability to be a successful student. All in all it has been a very honest account of what being a university student means.

Because information is relatively easy to communicate through print, the major question regarding the program processes for the investigator were those related to whether the programs served to assist students in doing some self-assessment about the appropriateness of the Athabasca system for themselves and whether, in the brief time and space of the program formats, useful direction could be given regarding potential problems and possible strategies for resolving those problems. Although lacking behavioral measurement of self-assessment or of self-efficacy, the comments offered by participants suggested that many students did use the programs for these purposes. Representative comments from participants are illustrative of this use.

Regarding self-assessment in relationship to institutional requirements, students said:

> A greater degree self motivation is required than I believed was necessary. the "pro vs con" arguments for attending Athabasca...... was helpful.
>
> Up until receiving the guidebook, I was frightened of taking myself seriously - just taking one or two courses didn't seem enough to qualify me as a student. I feel a bit differently now and feel that I will have more confidence in making the course(s) a priority in my life.
>
> Until forced to look at it, I didn't really think I had it in me, or know how many positive points I had by way of time, support or confidence.
>
> [Have learned] the importance of reevaluating my free time, motivation and personal concerns. I'm quite glad for the detrimental points of the University and your program that have been pointed out.
>
> I found this guidebook to be most effective in helping me prepare for a university education, by pointing out just what is involved and giving guidelines that help you decide whether you have the self-discipline to study and the motivation to see it through.
>
> Did put things into perspective for me.
>
> I did not anticipate the changes which are required.
>
> Made me realize that my lifestyle should change because of my courses - I'm not just being selfish.
>
> A little scary, but an eye opener. Sobering but complete and needed.
>
> Made me realize I was changing my way of life - not just picking up a few courses.
>
> It contains a lot of useful information and questions which are very important to answer - it's nice to have something which gives form to your thoughts when you're making a decision.

Regarding awareness of strategies and resources to deal with problems, students said:

> There are a lot of valid points made [that] one wouldn't normally think of, but more than that, it offers solutions.
>
> Helped me set priorities and goals.
>
> Gave me a better insight into the approach I should take in improving personal study skills.
>
> The part on positive thought and relaxation techniques is well done as these areas I have found most difficult while being fully employed.
>
> One important thing I've decided to do is buy a desk or table to set up in my bedroom so I won't be distracted by T.V. my children, ect..
>
> It gave me a better idea of how much time I will need.
>
> I hung a shoelace up as a reminder where I can come it if I have trouble with something. The guidebook gets me back on track.

> The "Self-Talk" is very helpful.
>
> It gets you thinking how negative one can be and gets you on the right track.
>
> It does present many ways to solve possible problems, which does make a huge difference in the decision to enroll.
>
> The Guidebook has been very instrumental in giving me a positive attitude towards studying. The ideas of approaching study, all the hurdles, self doubt, motivating factors that need to be overcome in order to study successfully, have been clearly pointed out in the Guidebook. The idea of studying to achieve your own personal goal adapting your own study schedules or techniques to suit your own circumstances has been an idea I have learned from the Guidebook. I have also learned techniques of how to study and various ideas to help overcome stress from this Guidebook.

The major differences between the two experimental groups in responses noted was the expected focus in the workshop evaluations on the opportunity and value of meeting and exchanging thoughts and feelings with other incoming Athabasca University students. Participants sometimes used the occasion to exchange telephone numbers and even to arrange another meeting.

In conclusion, student evaluations indicated that they felt the programs were effective in providing them with a means of assessing themselves in relation to the requirements of a distance university and in developing an awareness of some strategies for dealing with common problems arising with a return to formal education as an adult.

" Expert judge" assessment of Athabasca University student needs and of effectiveness of orientation programs in fullfilling those needs. The perspective of several Athabasca University staff members views on the needs of incoming students as well as on the effectiveness of the programs in meeting those needs were obtained for four reasons. The first was to incorporate these particular perspectives on the needs of Athabasca University students into those more general perspectives already obtained from the literature on adult and distance university students. The second was to receive judgments on the congruity between the stated goals of the programs and the effectiveness of the processes used by the programs in meeting those goals. The third was to obtain some external views on possible side or unintended program effects. The fourth was to involve important consumers (i.e., decision makers involved in support or non-support of the programs) in the evaluation process.

The "expert judge" perspectives obtained were those of the following Athabasca University staff: the Academic Vice President, the Director of the Northern Regional Office (at which the study was completed), the Coordinator of Regional Services, a professor of psychology and three counsellors who had participated as workshop leaders before, during, or after this study. Two of the counsellors were also course tutors. Each judge assessed only the program they had personally reviewed (see Expert Judge Questionnaire, Appendix N). The home-study program was consequently assessed by all the judges while both programs were reviewed only by the counsellors and the Coordinator of Regional Services. Since the assessments were very similar, ratings were combined for Table 5. Differences in counsellor ratings indicated that the workshops were viewed as somewhat more effective than the home-study programs.

Table 5

"Expert Judge" Assessment of Student Needs and of Program Effectiveness in Meeting those Needs

Program Component	Degree of Need (Expressed on 5 pt. scale*)	Effectiveness of Programs in Meeting Needs (Expressed on 5 pt. scale**)
Athabasca University System, Student Population, and Resources		
13a Knowledge of University resources available to assist students in achieving their educational goals (e.g., tutors, counsellors, reference material)	4.4	4.1
13i Awareness of resources available to assist students in improving their learning and study skills	3.7	3.7
13l Awareness of resource available to assist students in improving one's skills in maintaining self-motivation	3.6	3.6
Athabasca Student Population		
13b Knowledge of AU student characteristics (e.g., age, educational background, experience as AU students)	2.7	4.3
13c Knowledge of adult student characteristics (e.g., self-doubt, time and role conflicts, learning potential)	3.9	4.3
Self Assessment Related to Institutional Requirements		
13d Knowledge of personal characteristics important for success as a distance university student (e.g., self-discipline, good reading and writing skills, ability to plan appropriately)	3.6	3.9

13e Knowledge of situational characteristics that are important for succeeding as a distance university student (e.g., support from family/ friends, adequate study space and time)	3.9	4.2
Development of Awareness of Needed Skills		
13f Awareness that planning with family and/or significant others may help avoid time and role conflicts	3.7	4.0
13g Awareness that efficient learning and study skills are useful and can be learned	3.4	3.5
13h Awareness of some strategies for increasing learning and study skills	3.6	3.5
13j Awareness of the need for self-maintenance of motivation in a self-paced mode of education	4.0	3.8
13k Awareness of strategies for increasing self-maintenance of motivation	3.7	3.6

---

* Degree of Need Rating Scale:
5 - Maximum priority, a desperate need
4 - Great importance
3 - Probably significant need
2 - Possibly significant need
1 - No good evidence of significant need

** Program Effectiveness Rating Scale:
5 - Excellent and comprehensive
4 - Good and fairly comprehensive
3 - Minimally acceptable
2 - Weak - less than adequate
1 - Negligible - essentially none

Expert judge ratings of Athabasca University student needs as reflected in the program content indicated that knowledge of university resources and awareness of the need for self-maintenance of motivation were seen as having the greatest importance. All other needs addressed by the programs were described as being between a need of "great importance" and a "probably significant need". Only the program component addressed to providing knowledge of Athabasca University student characteristics received a rating which indicated it was seen as lower than a "probably significant need" but greater than a "possibly significant need".

Program effectiveness on all items was rated between 3.5 and 4.20 or closely around a judgment of "good and fairly comprehensive". The slightly greater effectiveness ratings given the workshop program by counsellors were not gained through consistently different ratings on the same items by all counsellors. The most diverse ratings by counsellors were given to program components related to the introduction of the stress inoculation approach (Meichenbaum, 1985) as a means of maintaining motivation. These differences may well reflect differences in the counselling orientations of the counsellors.

Expert judge views on side or unintended effects of the programs included the following observations:

Home-Study program

> A good entry to establishing a psychological sense of community with our students.
>
> Creates an awareness that a student is not alone in their fears and self-doubts - reducing anxiety.
>
> Serves as a chance to test the distance educational system in a small way.

Telling It Like It Is

> May be counter-productive for students who are falling behind. Student models on the tape may be too successful.

Workshop

> Opportunity to meet and share ideas with real people facing the same

dilemmas.

Opportunity for counselling staff to learn more about student experiences as incoming students than may be available in one-to-one contact.

Provides a basis for the development of student networking.

Opens the door to a "spirit of AU student community".

Provides a non-threatening contact with counselling staff thereby increasing the possibility of further contact by students if problems arise.

Opposing suggestions were made on the following:

The value of the amount of direction given in going through the home-study package: One judge felt there should be more, one judged it appropriate.

The value of more Athabasca system information (i.e. alternate course delivery modes, library use, availability of professors and tutors): Some wanted more, some less of this information.

The time spent on development of coping strategies (e.g. study skills, time management, communication skills, essay writing, stress management): Some felt the present emphasis was adequate, others felt these needed further development.

The length of each of the programs: Some felt they should be left as they were, others felt the length of both programs should be increased.

The overall judgment was that the programs were addressed to important student needs and both were effective in meeting those needs. Unintended side effects were judged to be primarily beneficial ones for both students and staff. The one negative side effect suggested on the possible counter-productive effect of the successful models on the tape *Telling It Like It Is,* should be considered. Evidence available from student evaluations indicated, nevertheless, that students found the tape highly motivating (see student evaluations Appendices K and L). Suggested changes for upgrading of the programs revealed considerable differences among the perspectives of the consumers sampled. This information was seen as useful as a basis for program revisions as well as for the focus of proposals for extended program support.

Student self-report on institutional awareness, assessment data, and coping skills. Three months following course registration, a questionnaire (see Appendix P) focused on obtaining student perceptions on various aspects of how well prepared for studying with Athabasca University they had been when they began their studies was mailed to participants in the two experimental programs as well as to a random sample of the no-treatment comparison group. Six questionnaires were returned with incorrect mailing addresses. Of those questionnaires which one could expect were received by the intended students, response rates of 46, 50, and 52 percent were obtained from the comparison, home-study and workshop groups respectively. The proportion of these students reporting that they had turned in course assignments (69, 66, and 75 percent of the comparison, home-study, and workshop groups respectively) suggested the majority of the responding students were active in their courses.

Responses to items on the questionnaires were categorized according to the programs' model (Haverkamp, 1983) for orientation programs. This model incorporates three elements thought to be required for adaptation to an educational environment. Those elements were (a) knowledge of the institution (the system, the resources, and the student population), (b) a means of assessing or understanding oneself in relation to the educational demands of the institution, and (c) the development of awareness of skills needed for coping with the educational requirements. Table 6 provides the mean response of students in each group to questions relating to knowledge of the institutional system, its student population, and its resources. A composite "Institutional System Awareness" score represents the mean rating on all the questions listed on Table 6. Table 7 provides responses to questions focused on self-assessment related to institutional requirements, with a composite "Assessment Data" score. (The questions on AU student and adult student characteristics were used in both "Institutional System Awareness" and "Assessment Data" scores.) Table 8 provides the response of students to questions related to awareness and acquisition of skills and yields a composite "Coping Skills" score.

Table 6

Student Self-Rating Of Knowledge Of The Athabasca University System, Student Population, And Resources At Three Months Following Course Registration

Questions	No-Program Group N=15 x Rating*	Home-Study Group N=16 x Rating*	Workshop Group N=17 x Rating*
Athabasca University System			
14 When you became an Athabasca University student, were you sufficiently informed about this system of education so you could plan appropriately?	3.1	3.9	4.1
Athabasca Student Population			
13b Knowledge of Athabasca University student characteristics (e.g., age, educational background, experience as AU student)	2.6	3.5	3.7
13c Knowledge of adult student characteristics (e.g., self-doubt, time and role conflicts, learning potential)	2.9	3.5	4.0
Athabasca University Resources			
13a Knowledge of University resources available to assist students in achieving their educational goals (e.g., tutors, counsellors, coordinators, workshops, home-study reference material)	3.2	4.1	4.2

13i Awareness of resources available to assist students in improving their learning and study skills	2.9	3.5	3.3
13l Awareness of resources available to assist in improving one's skills in maintaining self-motivation	2.5	3.3	2.2
Composite "Institutional System Awareness" score	2.9	3.6	3.6

* Rating scale used
5 - Excellent and comprehensive
4 - Good and fairly comprehensive
3 - Minimally acceptable
2 - Weak - less than adequate
1 - Negligible - essentially none

Table 7

Student Awareness of Personal Characteristics Required by the Athabasca University Distance Education System at Three Months Following Course Registration

Questions	No-Program Group N=15 x Rating*	Home-Study Group N=16 x Rating*	Workshop Group N=17 x Rating*
13b Knowledge of AU student characteristics (e.g., age, educational background, experience as AU students)	2.6	3.5	3.7
13c Knowledge of adult student characteristics (e.g., self-doubt, time and role conflicts, learning potential)	2.9	3.5	4.0
13d Knowledge of personal characteristics important for success as a distance university student (e.g., self-discipline, good reading and writing skills, ability to plan appropriately)	3.5	3.7	4.2
13e Knowledge of situational characteristics that are important for succeeding as a distance university student (e.g., support from family, friends, adequate study space and time)	3.5	3.9	3.6
Composite "Assessment Data" score	3.2	3.7	3.9

* Rating scale used

5 - Excellent and comprehensive
4 - Good and fairly comprehensive
3 - Minimally acceptable
2 - Weak - less than adequate
1 - Negligible - essentially none

Table 8

Student Self-Rating On Questions Relating To Awareness And Acquisition Of Needed Skills At Three Months Following Course Registration

Questions	No-Program Group N=15 x Rating*	Home-Study Group N=16 x Rating*	Workshop Group N=17 x Rating*
13f Awareness that planning with family and/or significant others may help avoid time and role conflicts.	3.5	3.9	3.8
13g Awareness that efficient learning and study skills are useful and can be learned.	3.5	4.3	4.3
13h Awareness of some strategies for increasing learning and study skills.	3.2	3.7	3.3
13j Awareness of the need for self-maintenance of motivation in a self-paced mode of education.	3.5	3.6	4.1
13k Awareness of strategies for increasing self-maintenance of motivation.	2.8	3.3	3.6
Composite "Coping Skills" score	3.3	3.8	3.8

* Rating scale used
5 - Excellent and comprehensive
4 - Good and fairly comprehensive
3 - Minimally acceptable
2 - Weak - less than adequate
1 - Negligible - essentially none

The responses given by students indicated that students in both the experimental orientation programs rate themselves as (a) better informed about Athabasca University's system, resources, and student population, (b) more aware of the characteristics that are seen as required of students attending Athabasca, and (c) more knowledgeable about some of the skills needed in making the transition to being a successful student than were no-program students. Students from the no-program comparison group report themselves as having a less than "minimally acceptable" (i.e. a rating of 2.9) level of awareness on the items making up the "Institutional System Awareness" score. Since the score includes items considered by the expert judges within Athabasca University to be of great importance, this self-rating by students who had been active students for three months suggested a serious deficiency may have existed for these students. Self-ratings of 3.6 (or between "minimally acceptable" and "good and fairly comprehensive") by the home-study participants and by the workshop participants indicated that these program participants saw themselves as being well aware of the Athabasca University system, its resources, and its student population. A notable deviation on these institutional awareness questions was the 2.2 self-rating by workshop participants on the question relating to their awareness of resources available to assist them in improving skills in maintaining motivation. It was hypothesized that the workshop emphasis on using a self-help approach to motivation maintenance may have obscured other information on the availability of assistance from Athabasca University resources. Relatively high self-ratings by workshop participants on awareness of strategies for self-maintenance of motivation lent support to the hypothesis.

Consideration of the adequacy of services to students, especially for non-help-seeking adult students in a personally and often geographically distant educational setting, involves not only the availability of services but the availability of services that are acceptable or non-threatening. Table 9 presents the responses of students from the experimental program and no-program groups to questions on their use and views on services. It was of interest to note that with one exception, all students responded positively to a general question on the adequacy of Athabasca University services. Yet during in-depth interviews three out of seven no-program students interviewed noted a lack of information on the Athabasca system when they were first admitted as a deficiency. Additionally, students who had participated in either of the orientation programs universally recommended these programs for new students and occasionally commented that such programs should be compulsory for new students. It appears from these responses that the lack of services was not identified on a general survey question, but was so identified under other circumstances.

Table 9

Student Self-Report on Use and Preference For Services at Athabasca University

Questions	No-Program Group N=15	Home-Study Group N=16	Workshop Group N=17
		(percent response)	
"How have you found AU in terms of the information and assistance available to incoming students?"			
(a) Has met all of my requirements well	45	47	47
(b) Generally good	36	53	53
(c) Barely acceptable	-	-	-
(d) Some available but incomplete	09	-	-
(e) Nothing worthwhile available	-	-	-
"Have you had contact with:"			
(a) Your tutor	92	100	100
(b) A counsellor	61	46	62
(c) The AU Library	31	20	12
(d) A course coordinator	31	07	06
"If orientation programs had been offered when you first registered at AU, which of the following would you have chosen?"			
(a) Orientation workshop	26	13	24
(b) Home-study orientation program	27	62	-
(c) Both of the above	47	25	76
(d) None of the above	06	-	-

The acceptability of services, particularly preventive programs aimed at problems not yet experienced by the target population, is a critical factor in their utilization. The previously noted finding of this study that approximately 21 to 22 percent of incoming students volunteered for whichever of the two orientation programs was offered might have suggested that the two programs were equally acceptable to the same sub-groups of students. That such similarity in acceptance did not exist was demonstrated by examination of the entry characteristics of the two program groups. The response given to the question (see Table 9) regarding choice of orientation programs revealed further evidence of a choice factor. All students who initialy chose to participate in an orientation workshop said they would choose that option again; of the students who participated in the home-study program, 13 percent said they would have chosen a workshop had it been offered. The no-program students appeared to be about evenly divided between the choice of home-study or workshop program. Both types of programs, then, appear necessary to provide genuinely accessible orientation programs for the diverse population served by Athabasca University.

Counsellor views on student reactions to five months experience as Athabasca University students. A random sample of students to be interviewed was selected from each of the two experimental orientation programs and no-program comparison groups of students. Students were interviewed either by telephone or in-person by two independent interviewers who also worked as counsellors for Athabasca University. Interviewers were given two training sessions in the use of a semi-structured interview format (see Appendices R and S). They were also asked to rate each student interviewed on five dimensions reflecting their judgment as to whether these issues were related to lack of course progress for that student. Interviews were held approximately five months after course registration.

The goal was to interview 25 percent of the two experimental and comparison groups. Due to attrition and clerical error there were, in fact, seven students from the workshop group, seven students from the no-program group and nine students from the home-study group interviewed. In one case a student from the workshop group had not registered in a course but was interviewed. Some items on the interview format were, therefore, not relevant and were not tabulated.

The interview focused on (a) adequacy of the information students had on the Athabasca University system, (b) problems encountered by students, (c) effects of their experience with Athabasca University on future educational plans, (d) recommendations by students for improvements to Athabasca University's educational system, and (e) descriptors used by students to differentiate their perceptions of good from poor candidates to Athabasca University. The results are presented in Tables 10 through 16.

The data reflect either the perception of the investigator in reviewing the taped interviews or in the case of Table 10 and 11, the combined ratings of three judges - the interviewer, the investigator, and one other Athabasca University counsellor who had no other contact with the study.

Table 10

Counsellor Assessment of Information Level of Students With and Without Orientation to Athabasca University

Rating	No-Program Group N=7 (f)	Home-Study Group N=9 (f)	Workshop Group N=6 (f)
5 - Excellent, comprehensive	0	4	4
4 - Good and fairly comprehensive	3	3	2
3 - Minimally acceptable	1	1	0
2 - Weak, less than adequate	3	1	0
1 - Negligible-essentially none	0	0	0
Mean rating	x = 3.0	x = 4.11	x = 4.67

Table 10 provides a judgment based on interview impressions of how well informed the students appeared to have been about the Athabasca University system when they first began their studies. Elements included in making this judgment were direct responses to a question concerning the information students had as well as statements made by the students which reflected early misconceptions or information gaps. The judgments made at this point were very similar to the self-ratings made by the students on the questionnaire described earlier (see Table 6, 7, and 8). Both ratings indicated that students in the experimental programs saw themselves and were seen by a counsellor familiar with the Athabasca University system as better informed than the no-program comparison students. Higher ratings of workshop participants as compared to home-study students were given by both the counsellors as well as the participants themselves.

The perspective of counsellors experienced in working with Athabasca University students was obtained to determine whether, from clinical observation, evidence existed that might suggest some long-term effects of participation in the orientation programs and might help define the problems encountered by students. Table 11 presents the combined ratings of three counsellors. The issues rated were (a) making time for study, (b) capacity to handle the level of academic work, (c) getting support from family/friends (d) ability to maintain self-motivation, and (e) learning and study skills.

Table 11

Counsellor Judgment of Significant Issues Related to Lack of Course Progress for Experimental and Comparison Groups at Five Months Following Registration

Group	Percent	Issue
No-program group N=7	53.8	Self-motivation
	46.1	Time
	38.5	Support
	15.4	Learning and study skills, capacity
Home-study group N=9	70.6	Time
	58.8	Self-motivation
	29.4	Support
	17.6	Learning and study skills
	0	Capacity
Workshop group N=6	30.8	Time
	23.0	Learning and study skills
	15.4	Capacity, self-motivation and support

Although these categories overlap - particularly where issues such as making time may involve other concerns such as setting priorities, obtaining support from others, maintaining motivation - there appeared to be no great difficulty in differentiating the categories. "Time" issues often revolved around unexpected changes in a student's life, e.g., personal upheavals, changing jobs, moving, pregnancy, increase in a child's needs. The question of capacity to handle university level work was addressed because of questions raised within Athabasca University regarding the frequency with which students of questionable academic ability were encountering difficulties.

The rating presented in Table 11 indicated that counsellors saw "time" to be a major issue for students from both experimental groups as well as the no-program groups. It was rated of highest significance for the home-study groups. Of the issues dealt with in the experimental orientation programs, the workshop group was rated as having the least difficulty with self-maintenance of motivation and with obtaining support from family and friends. This observation on self-maintenance of motivation appears consistent with the self-ratings (see Table 8) workshop participants give themselves on awareness of the need for and of strategies to maintain their own motivation level. These ratings appeared to indicate some effectiveness of the workshop program on this point. Learning and study skills were rated as a significant or very significant issue for approximately the same proportion of each group. Large differences between the three groups in educational background and in time away from formal education (see Table 3) suggested there may have been differences in entry level study skills. Any effect of the programs on this issue is, consequently, not clear.

Observations by counsellors on the proportion of students whose lack of course progress was very likely due to questionable academic ability indicated that approximately 15 percent of the workshop and no-program groups were experiencing problems on this account. The home-study group, having a relatively higher educational background, was not seen as having "capacity" as a significant issue. Table 12 provides ratings of the proportion of students in all groups who were observed to have either significant problems or to have little or no significant problems with the issues listed. The ability to maintain self-motivation was rated as affecting the largest proportion of students; approximately 45 percent were seen as experiencing this as a major problem and 30 percent as experiencing few or no problems with this issue. The observation by counsellors is consistent with the higher rating given this need by other expert judges within Athabasca University (see Table 5).

Table 12

Counsellor Ranking of Issues Related to Lack of Course Progress for Program and No-Program Students

Issues	Significant or Very Significant Issue N=22 (Percent)	Minor or no Evidence of this Being an Issue N=22 (Percent)
Making time for study	49.1	39.6
Capacity to handle level of academic work	13.2	71.7
Getting support from family and friends	28.3	54.8
Ability to maintain self-motivation	45.6	30.2
Learning and study skills	18.9	64.2

A personal, and in the long run societal, cost of attrition in any educational institution may be the negative effect that an unsuccessful attempt at achieving an educational goal has on those experiencing failure. A question regarding future educational goals and the effect of experience with Athabasca University on those future goals was, therefore, posed during the interview. Responses given by students (Table 13) did not indicate that they openly viewed their experience with Athabasca University as indicative of a lack of their ability to handle university level education. Those experiencing uncertainty regarding future educational plans gave reasons mainly related to changes in their family or work situations. The students planning on continuing studies with a conventional university had started with Athabasca University as a way of easing their way back into university education or had decided that a conventional educational system was more appropriate for them.

Table 13

Educational Plans of Athabasca Students Following
Five Months Experience with Athabasca University

Educational Plans	No-Program Group N=7 (f,%)	Home-Study Group N=9 (f,%)	Workshop Group N=6 (f,%)
Continue studies with Athabasca University	4,57	5,55	3,50
Continue studies with another university	1,14	1,11	2,33
Continue studies with other post-secondary institution	–	–	–
Discontinue formal education	–	1,14	–
Not certain	2,28	2,22	1,17

Within this small sample, it did not appear that difficulties with the Athabasca University system had a noticeable adverse effect on future educational aspirations. Generalizations based on this evidence would be hazardous, however, due to the small sample size and possible bias in the direction of more successful students.

The particular challenges of the distance program offered by Athabasca University as seen by the students interviewed resulted in the list of characteristics they felt differentiated good from poor candidates for Athabasca University (Table 14) .While many of the characteristics listed would be possessed by students in any university, the emphasis on strong self-motivation and self-discipline may be more pronounced. The suggestion that this system of education was not appropriate for homemakers with young children may reflect the reality of the time commitment ordinarily expected and given by people in these circumstances to their home and families.

Table 14

Descriptors Used by Students to Suggest Good and Poor Candidates for the Athabasca University System

Type of Characteristic	Descriptors of Good AU Candidates	Descriptors of Poor AU Candidates
Personal traits (Interests, values attributes)	-Intellectually curious -Strongly motivated(5) -Active approach to shaping life (2) -Self disciplined (3) -Able to manage time (2) -Able to concentrate -Likes to study -Enjoys challenge -Able to say "No" -Able to work independently -Strong willed -People who can persist/not easily discouraged -Values learning(2) -Able to set priorities -Dedicated -Prepared to work(2) -Emotionally mature	-Uncertain of goals(2) -Dislikes reading -Education not valued for its own sake -Someone needing lectures and classroom help in order to learn -"Coasters"-those taking passive approach to life (2) -Easily distracted -Not self-disciplined -Not curious or ambitious -Those registering without adequate or thorough preparation -Someone needing external push -Poor educational background
Situational characteristics	-Being a homemaker who doesn't work outside home -Older people	-Married with small children -Homemakers with outside jobs and children -Older adolescents/need the social contact of conventional university

Views of the students were also sought on improvements they would recommend at Athabasca University. The responses given by students in the experimental program and no-program comparison groups follow.

No-program student suggestions:

Should start a Masters program.

Need more forewarning on course time lines.

Need more information on AU system - more than just course information.

Need more flexible exam procedures (i.e., accept tutor judgment of knowledge in-lieu-of exam for test-anxious students).

Set up admission procedures so person entering AU has some notion of the expectations of Athabasca students.

Decrease time delays in getting assignment and exam feedback to students.

Provide more personal contact then just the tutor - on things like time-management.

Need more approachable tutors.

Home-study student suggestions:

Nothing to suggest. Everything O.K.

System O.K. Positive feedback from tutor very helpful.

Provide baby sitting service for women with small children.

Make course related help available between tutor nights.

Provide more specific information on type and length of exams.

Provide the beginning student with more information on what to expect.

Provide someone who is involved with your progress over your whole program.

Workshop student suggestions:

The system and information about it was good. I needed to try it - but found it just wasn't for me.

Should help more in getting students together.

Courses should have quidelines on how much to do each week.

There needs to be even more emphasis on setting time lines for yourself.

> AU has already given much more than I expected.
>
> More skills workshops (From a student who had already taken four workshops on orientation, career planning, exam anxiety, and job search).
>
> Expand the science program.
>
> Review course materials for bad writing, overuse of jargon.
>
> Revise tone of letters from the Registry.

The number of no-program students (three out of seven) who suggested that more information and preparation (and, in one case, personal contact) be provided incoming students contrasts with the experimental groups where none of the workshop participants and only one out of nine home-study participants made similar suggestions.

In view of the argument (Empire State College Research Series, 1982) that there is an irreducible level of attrition beyond which efforts to improve an educational program will be ineffective, examination of the twenty-three students interviewed in terms of whether difficulties in course progress seemed to be related to circumstances within the University's ability to remediate appeared to be appropriate. Judgments were, consequently, made regarding whether the students who appeared to be failing to complete their course(s) might have been helped by any interventions on the part of the University. Consideration of the case histories related (see Appendix U for abbreviated case histories) resulted in the definition of five categories of students who did not appear to be completing their course(s) (a) due to unanticipated external circumstances, (b) due to need for a trial of the distance system to determine its appropriateness, (c) due to educational needs being met without credit completion, (d) due to system policies which made completion impractical or impossible, and (e) due to, at least partially, lack of adequate orientation. Table 15 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 15

Predicted Attrition And Completion At
Five Months Following Registration

Expected attrition due to unanticipated external circumstances

- Case #5: Several traumatic personal events
- Case #9: Unexpected time requirements of second baby ~~and~~ home-building
- Case #11: Well informed but unmotivated. Enrolled under pressure of spouse
- Case #15: Informed but had other priorities. Pressure from father to enroll.
- Case #16: Informed, highly motivated and well organized. Promotion and requirements of new job took priority.

Expected attrition due to need for use of trial of the distance system to determine its appropriateness.

- Case #10: Reasonably informed about system and aware that it had drawbacks for him. Despite drawbacks, it seemed to be the only alternative available.
- Case #17: Well informed but still needed to try distance system to know whether it would work.
- Case #18: Well informed but still needed to try distance system to know whether it would work.

Expected attrition due to educational needs being met without credit completion.

- Case #20: Used AU to determine whether he was capable of a return to university. Felt experience useful but did not need course credit for this purpose.

Expected attrition due to system policies.

- Case #3: Informed, motivated, found independent study excellent. Exam requirement an insurmountable barrier for long-standing severe exam anxiety.

(Table 15 continued)

Expected attrition at least partially due to lack of adequate orientation

Case #2: Felt uninformed on system, knew only about course content.

Case #4: Registered without consideration of goals. Was aware of time-management concerns and of resources available but did not use. Felt AU should insist that new students receive some kind of orientation.

Case #7: Uninformed and unprepared for AU system. Shift work made tutor contact difficult. Recognized need for better organization of time.

Case #12: Likes system but found independence hard to deal with.

Successful completion expected.

Case #1: Strong motivation. Found system less than ideal (e.g., misses the "entertainment value of lectures") but has successfully adapted himself to the system.

Case #5: Experienced with distance education; systematic and well organized. Strong motivation to obtain degree.

Case #8: Informed. Course is part of long-term career plan.

Case #13: Informed. Experienced in home-study. Course is related to earning professional credential.

Case #14: Working toward professional credential. Never liked school but is finding this system OK. Doesn't use tutor. Counsellor helped in "easing your way into the system".

Case #19: Well informed, motivated. New job, move, needs of children have taken priority. A questionable outcome.

Case #22: Well informed. Has work history involving independent research. Has time and support.

Case #23: Well informed. Highly motivated, independent, "self-actualizing" person.

Note: Because approximately two-thirds of the above students had participated in orientation programs, the proportion of uninformed students could be expected to be greater in a random sample of new Athabasca University students.

Table 16

Reasons For Expected Attrition And Completion Related To Athabasca University Services

Category		Percent in category N = 22
I	Expected attrition due to unanticipated external circumstance	22.7
II	Expected attrition due to irrelevance of credit completion to educational goals	4.5
III	Expected attrition due to system policies	4.5
IV	Expected attrition due to need for use of trial and error as assessment of system even though well informed	13.6
V	Expected attrition due, at least partially, to lack of orientation	18.2
VI	Successful completion expected	36.4

From the analysis of the categories presented in Table 15, it appeared that approximately 23 percent of students were not progressing in their courses primarily because of unanticipated events in their lives that took priority over their studies. Another 5 percent were satisfied that they were engaged in meaningful learning but were unconcerned with earning credits. These two categories, comprising 28 percent of students interviewed, would appear to have been impervious to any intervention on the part of Athabasca University. Another 5 percent of those heading for attrition could not have been helped with current examination requirements. Assuming that one might expect at least a 5 percent rate of attrition due to some institutional policies difficult, or impossible, for some students to surmount and for the University to change (e.g., inflexibility in tutor hours, errors in estimating pre-requisite course knowledge), this left an estimated 33 percent rate of attrition that appeared to be irreducible. With more refined assessment procedures and more available orientation to the Athabasca University system, some reduction in the 13.6 and 18.2 percent of students seen as needing to use trial and error as an assessment method or as needing more information and preparation for dealing with a distance system of education might be expected. With assessment knowledge remaining at the level currently available, and all students having access to orientation programs, a projected potential completer rate for new students to Athabasca University was estimated at 45 percent.

The information obtained through interviews with a sample of students in the experimental and control groups reinforced the student self-ratings given on Table 6. This interview data (a) suggested the workshops may have been more effective than the home-study program in helping students deal with self-maintenance of motivation, (b) did not indicate that attrition at Athabasca University was associated with adverse side effects (although sample size and sample bias made this a very weak source of data), (c) indicated that descriptors used by students to differentiate good and poor Athabasca University candidates were in line with the thrust of literature on adult distance education students elsewhere, and (d) demonstrated that the lack of information and preparation for the Athabasca system was identified as a deficiency by three out of seven students who had not had the opportunity of participation in an orientation program.

Examination of the interview protocols for factors associated with attrition suggest that approximately one third of incoming students failed to complete their coursework because of factors unrelated to the University program. Another one-third of these students could have probably been assisted by improved assessment and orientation services.

Course progress of experimental program and no-program comparison groups. Measures of course progress constituted the final long-term program effects collected for the evaluation of the home-study and workshop orientation programs. The attrition rates observed at Athabasca University signaled possible problems for students intending to use this institution as a means of obtaining university education. The preventive interventions developed were orientation programs designed to prepare students for a distance system of education and for common transitional concerns facing adult students returning to formal education. While the effects of short-term home-study and workshop programs within the first month of registration might not reasonably have been expected to substantially change course completion rates following nearly a year of other important intervening variables such as tutor contact and feedback on coursework, determination of these outcome measures was seen as desirable, and an indication of positive effects seen as a potentially persuasive argument for the value of the programs. However, because the focus of the programs was primarily the initial period of adaptation to university, evidence of early steps taken toward successful course completion seemed a more reasonable criterion of program effects than final completion rates.

Information was consequently gathered on "start rates" as well as on completer rates. A "start rate" was defined as evidence that a course assignment or exam had been recorded on the Student Record System but that the course had not yet been completed. A "start" then indicated that a student had made a substantial start on their coursework. "Completer rates" were defined as the number or proportion of students who completed a course. (Completer rates for this study will be at variance with completion rate statistics published by Athabasca University's Office of Institutional Studies for two reasons. The Office of Institutional Studies rate includes all students and the completion rates calculated are those of courses completed not the number of students completing courses. This study was concerned with new students only and with a student completer rate rather than a course completed rate. One student completer, for example, might be the source of numerous course completions. The term "completer rate" was adopted to distinguish this rate from "course completion rate".)

Completer and start rates were calculated from Athabasca University Registry records as of October, 1984, This data collection date allowed for a lapse of ten to twelve months following registration for students in experimental and comparison groups. This period was shorter than was usually allowed to lapse before completion rates were calculated at Athabasca University but was judged adequate for the purposes of this study. It should be noted, however, that at the time this data was collected the record showed six students listed as on course suspension (temporarily inactive but planning to resume studies at a future date). All six were from experimental groups. One was included as a home-study "start", the remaining five were tabulated as non-completers.

Completer and start rates are provided in Table 17.

Table 17

Completion and "Start" Rates of Participants in Experimental and No-Program Comparison Groups

Completion and Start Rate	No-Program Group N=32	Home-Study Group N=31 (percent)	Workshop Group N=32
Completions (Credit granted for completion)	21.9	29.0	28.1
"Starts" (Record of marked exams or assignments)	9.4	19.3	18.7
Non-completions	68.7	51.6	53.1
Combined "Starts" and Completions	31.2	48.4	46.9

Note: "Completion" refers to course completion, "start" refers to evidence of assignment or examination completion.

This data shows similar completer and start rates for the two experimental groups, these rates being somewhat higher than those of the no-program comparison group. Completer rates for the no-program, home-study and workshop groups were 21.9, 29.0, and 28.1 respectively. Start rates for the no-program, home-study, and workshop groups were 9.4, 19.3, and 18.7 respectively. Combining starts and completers provided an index of course progress for the no-program, home-study, and workshop groups of 31.2, 48.4, and 46.9 percent respectively. A chi square test comparing independent proportions obtained from dichotomous data was applied to determine statistical significance of the differences found. The results of this statistical test indicated the two treatment groups were virtually identical in course progress results and that neither course progress of the home-study group (chi square 1.93, 1 df, and $p < .15$) nor the workshop group (chi square 1.64, 1 df, and $< .17$) were statistically significantly different from the course progress rates of the comparison group at commonly accepted confidence levels.

Evaluation Rating Results

Scriven's approach to determining program effectiveness requires examination of a broad range of data which is categorized under thirteen dimensions. This section includes a definition of each of the thirteen dimensions, assessment of evidence on that dimension, and a conclusion regarding the support or non-support of the programs provided by the evidence on that dimension.

The dimensions examined are need, market, field trial, consumers, comparison, long-term effects, side effects, process, causation, statistical significance, educational significance, cost effectiveness, and extended support. It should be noted that the dimension labeled "educational significance" is essentially a combination of evidence on all the preceding factors. The last two factors, cost effectiveness and extended support, address issues of accountability and the need for consideration of the politics of evaluation.

Need: Evidence that a defensible social or economic need may be served by the programs.

Evidence on whether there is a genuine need for the programs was provided through (a) a review of literature on adult learner needs, especially in distance university settings, (b) a review of literature on attrition in university settings, (c) consideration of the attrition rates and institutional concerns regarding those attritions rates within Athabasca University, and (d) consideration of counselling staff concerns regarding the impact of the low information level on Athabasca University typical of incoming Athabasca students.

The literature on adult learner needs in university settings suggests that there are common transitional problems (e.g., lack of confidence, role conflicts, skill deficits) that are amenable to psycho-educational interventions. Resolution of these transitional problems as well as of concerns specific to distance education (e.g., need for independent, self-motivated work and isolation from institutional and peer support) are commonly seen as critical in the early stages of the educational process. The attrition literature indicates that while relatively high attrition should be expected to accompany open-admission, part-time adult education, attrition may be reduced through appropriate support services such as orientation programs. While consideration of attrition depends on widely varying definitions and measurement strategies, the evidence of attrition at Athabasca University was that well over half the student body did not complete the courses in which they were registered. Although accepting some level of attrition as inevitable and possibly even useful, documents and discussions internal to Athabasca University showed that widespread concern existed regarding reasons for student attrition and concern that reasonable efforts be made to determine whether attrition could be reduced while maintaining current open-admission policies. Athabasca University counselling staff experienced in working with incoming students indicated that the level of awareness about the University's system typically was low. This had resulted in a counselling work load heavily weighted with repetitious information-giving. Concerns were expressed about both the inadequate preparation students had upon entering the system as well as the misuse of counsellor resources.

In conclusion, both the literature on adult learners in distance universities as well as the particular experience of students at Athabasca University suggested that there were common problems in the experience of returning to school as an adult, as well as in of becoming a distance university student, that resulted in high attrition rates for students. While accepting some level of attrition as inevitable, high levels of attrition were seen as a waste both to the students involved and to the society which supports the university system. The evidence appeared sufficient to conclude that there was a need for exploring and, if possible, implementing ways to reduce the difficulties which precede attrition for students entering Athabasca University.

Market: Evidence to show the existence of (a) a demonstrably reachable market and (b) present and forseeable sources for continued program production if the evaluation is positive.

Evidence of a demonstrably reachable, rather than an assumed, market was based on response to the pilot runs as well as a field trial of the programs and on student evaluations of these programs. Evidence of whether present or foreseeable staff resources would be available was based on Athabasca University plans for professional staffing in regional offices.

The pilot runs of the programs resulted in an assessment of favorable student responses to both programs. During the field trial an offer of either one or the other program was presented to a random sample of new admissions registering in the Northern Regional Office during the fall of 1984. Flyers describing either the workshop or the home-study program were mailed to students within two weeks of their initial registration. Between 21 and 22 percent of these students responded by registering for the workshop program or by requesting that a home-study program be sent to them.

Evidence of present and foreseeable resources available for future program presentation was based on Athabasca University plans for increasing the level of student support services in regional offices throughout Alberta. The workshop program's dependence on professional staff did not, therefore, appear threatened. Resources for the home-study program involved the availability of printing services and staff resources for periodic updating and revision of this program. There appeared to be no difficulty in depending on a professional media service department for continued printing. Staff resources for revisions and updating of the home-study program, however, required transferring staff time from direct service to students or competing with other university departments for additional staff funding. Either of these alternatives was seen as uncertain. The positive evaluation of the programs was, nevertheless, seen as potentially persuasive evidence in obtaining needed resources.

In conclusion, evidence for a demonstrably reachable market was obtained by actual trial of the programs. The response to this trial run supported the conclusion that a substantial proportion (over 20 percent) of new admissions to Athabasca University would use the the orientation programs developed if invitations were offered as they were in the trial run, that is, by invitations mailed within two weeks of initial registration. Further evidence of the market for these programs was based on the response of participating students. Without exception, participants reported they would recommend these programs to others considering entry into the Athabasca University program. An assumption that word-of-mouth advertising would be reasonably favorable was made.

Evidence of present and forseeable resources indicated a reasonable chance that such resources would be available although competition for university funding inevitably left this issue in question. The conclusion that a "significant market will probably be reached" by these programs appeared justified.

True Field Trial: Evidence demonstrating that a field trial was done using (a) the final version of the programs, (b) typical users and staff, (c) an absence of involvement by the program developer or any special assistance and, (d) typical setting and time frame in which the program will be used.

Evidence presented on a true field trial consists of copies or detailed descriptions of the final programs (see Chapter 3 and Appendices E, F, and G) and a description of the promotion of the programs to a random sample of new students in the Northern Regional Office of Athabasca University in the fall of 1984. Although variations in promotion may occur in an ongoing program, both the method of presentation and the users of the program were representative of those expected in future use of the program.

Because the investigator was both the program developer and the workshop leader, a limitation existed regarding workshop effects with different workshop leaders. However, because it was anticipated that the program developer would continue to serve as a principal workshop leader the specified "typical use" condition was partially met. In addition, workshops held using three other staff members as workshop leaders prior to and after the field trial appeared to obtain similar student response. Variation in group workshop processes with differences in group membership and in leadership is inevitable. Workshop leaders commented, nevertheless, that the workshop was "well designed", "easy to give" and "works well". These comments were undoubtedly contaminated by the developer's personal involvement and relationships with the workshop leaders, but cannot be totally disregarded.

In conclusion there was adequate evidence that a field trial was done using (a) the final version of the programs, (b) typical users and staff members, and (c) typical setting and time-frame in which the program will be used. Program developer involvement as a workshop leader presents a possible bias, but is partially defensible on the grounds that continued use of the developer as workshop leader is expected and on the basis that other leaders reacted positively to the workshop format. The evidence indicates that a true field trial was achieved with only minor differences expected in future use of the programs.

True Consumer: Evidence that the information needs of all program consumers, including student participants, counselling staff and administrators concerned with funding student service initiatives, be addressed.

Evidence that the views of principal consumers of the programs were obtained rested on (a) an examination of the entry characteristics of participants in each program to determine the nature of the student consumer of each of the programs, (b) student evaluations of the programs as well as of their self-assessed information needs, and (c) a survey of "expert judge", i.e., administrative, academic staff and counselling staff, views on the program objectives and program effectiveness in meeting those objectives.

Analysis of the entry characteristics of participants in the workshop and the home-study program was seen as important indirect evidence of consumer views. This examination revealed that each program attracted somewhat different "consumers" (see Table 3). Workshop participants tended to be predominantly (77 percent) female students who had lower educational backgrounds and longer periods away from formal education than did a comparison group of Edmonton students. The home-study program attracted a higher proportion (57 percent) of male students who had a relatively high level of education (42 percent having had some university) and who had been away from formal education for a considerably longer period than had the comparison group, but not as long as had the workshop participants. One may infer the existence of somewhat different needs and perspectives from program participants with such different characteristics. These differences in program consumers was useful information for the formative aspects of this evaluation as well as for analysis of outcome results.

Student evaluation of the programs were generally positive regarding both the content and approach used (see Table 4, Appendices I and K).

The views of representative administrative, academic, and counselling staff indicated that all regarded the program objectives as sound and felt that the programs devised were likely to meet the stated objectives (see Table 5). There are indications that some administrative staff viewed the informational needs of students as of primary importance, while staff involved with direct service to students, (i.e., academic staff and counsellors) rate the need for personal and social skills of greater importance. While there was considerable overlap in views, differences in emphasis suggested the potential for different reception of various aspects of evaluation information. Counsellors tended to focus of the gains they felt were being made on the basis of their observations of the workshop. Outcome measures were seen as valuable but not critical criteria of success. Information on student demand for the programs and on cost-effectiveness appeared to be a higher priority for administrators responsible for funding decisions.

In conclusion, data on the informational needs of student participants, counselling staff, and representative administrative and academic staff was obtained. The evidence supports the judgment that "good data" was obtained on student and counselling staff and, in addition, that some useful data was obtained on the views of other relevant staff. Involvement of staff as "expert judges" in making an assessment of program goals and estimation of program outcome was used as a means of increasing extended support.

Crucial Comparisons: Presentation of data on the comparative performance of critically competitive programs.

The search for critical competitors was based on a literature search, a survey of Canadian universities having distance education programs, and a comparison of the workshop and home-study programs on process and outcome measures.

A literature review revealed very few alternative orientation programs in Canada for part-time or adult students and none for students of distance university programs. Formal evaluation of those programs available was limited, none included the use of control or comparison groups. Of the distance programs in England and Australia, program evaluation was similarly limited. Cultural differences in population and differences in university structure also posed difficulties in making comparative assessments.

The two programs developed were compared to each other on process and outcome measures and also compared to a no-treatment group. While there were, theoretically, numerous possible alternative program designs, the ones developed were "good bets" based on counselling outcome research. Each of the two programs were found to attract somewhat different segments of the student population (see Table 3). Expert judgment on process (see Table 5) and measured outcomes (see Tables 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 17) indicated that participants were acquiring somewhat similar benefits although there was some evidence of greater effectiveness of the workshops for the population served. The higher cost of the workshop was balanced by the greater needs of the students choosing this program, the strong preference expressed for this program by those participating in it, by the benefits that students reported receiving from participation, and by the course progress achieved by this relatively "disadvantaged" group of students. The home-study program was less costly, was geographically accessible to all students, and was an acceptable way of receiving orientation services by students who might not otherwise have participated.

Consideration of competitors to the audiovisual and delivery processes used in the two programs revealed that the choice of print and audio-tape for the home-study program was the lowest cost process found. Available competitors to the video tape as a stimulus to self-assessment and modeling of coping strategies in the workshop might have been live presentations by experienced students, or possibly role-playing by staff members. The first alternative would have been highly expensive in terms of the time spent by experienced students at numerous workshops and would have resulted in unpredictable and uneven presentations. The alternative of role-playing by staff members would very likely not have been as credible to participants and would have increased the skills required for workshop leaders. Comparative cost of the two programs and the alternative of individual counselling sessions is addressed under Dimension 12.

In conclusion, the programs designed appear to be achieving the goal of turning out informed students and on that basis achieve a function served by many typical orientation programs which focus primarily on information-giving. Student response and outcome results suggested that both of the programs studied also served to provide a means of self-assessment regarding the appropriateness of distance education and a means of anticipating and preparing for working within the system. The two programs designed were not found to be critical competitors because of their attraction to different segments of the student population.

Long-term Effects: Evidence that follow-up to determine long-term effects had been made.

Evidence of long-term effects on students was based on a mailed questionnaire at approximately three months following course registration, on interviews with a random sample of students from the experimental and comparison groups at five months following registration, and on records of course progress between ten and twelve months following registration. Long-term effects for Athabasca University were considered as side effects to the effects on students.

Student response to the questionnaire and counsellor observation from the interviews were outlined in detail in an earlier section of this chapter. The evidence obtained indicated that participants in the experimental programs saw themselves as (a) more knowledgeable about the Athabasca University system, student population, and resources, (b) more aware of the characteristics that were seen as required of students attending Athabasca University, and (c) more knowledgeable about the skills needed in an adult distance education program than did the no-program students. Interview observations suggested that program participant were better informed than no-program students. These observations also supported the higher self-ratings which workshop participants compared to home-study participants gave to their awareness and capacity in coping skills, especially those related to self-maintenance of motivation.

Evidence of long-term effects represented by course progress made at the ten to twelve months follow-up again suggested that program participants made more progress toward course completion than did no-program students although this difference was not statistically significant. In view of the entry characteristics of the three groups, the workshop group again appeared to have gained most from a program.

Adverse side effects regarding student self-perception of their academic potential were not apparent in student response at five months even when there was no evidence of course progress. Negative effects in terms of student perception of Athabasca University were suggested with three out of seven no-program students pointing to the University's failure to provide adequate preparation for incoming students.

In conclusion, the evidence suggested that the long-term effects of the program were positive for the participating students. Students felt that the programs had been helpful and that the University had provided them with a needed service. The lack of orientation was seen by a substantial proportion of no-program students who were not progressing well as a deficiency in University services.

Unintended or Side Effects: Evidence that a search for side or unintended effects of the program was made, preferably by an independent observer.

Assessment of side effects was made through consideration of (a) a survey of Athabasca University staff who served as "expert judges" to determine their views on goals achieved other than those to which the programs were directed, (b) interviews with counsellors who participated as workshop leaders, (c) inspection of open-ended questions on student evaluations and interviews, and (d) examination of the entry characteristics of participating students.

Representatives of Athabasca University staff, when questioned on possible unintended or side effects, suggested that both programs might serve as a good entry to "establishing a psychological sense of community" with students. It was also suggested that the home-study package provided students with an opportunity to test the distance education system in a small way. A possible counter-productive effect of including only successful students on the tape, *Telling It Like It Is,* was suggested for students who were failing to keep up. While this effect merits consideration, the program was addressed to students who had not yet had time to fail. The focus is on prevention rather than remediation. Student response (Appendices K and L) also indicated that the taped interviews were frequently mentioned as being easy to identify with and as having a highly motivating effect.

Counsellors who participated as workshop leaders indicated they saw two side effects of the workshop program. The first was that the student interaction in the groups provided a broadening of their own perspective on student characteristics and concerns.

The second was the observation that spontaneous efforts on the part of student participants to exchange phone numbers and to plan subsequent meetings indicated these sessions could serve as a nucleus from which peer support groups could develop for those students finding the isolation of distance education undesirable.

Student response (see Appendices K and L) indicated there was a clear focus on the intended goals. Observations that suggest side or unintended effects were minimal. Interviews with no-program students, however, indicated that the lack of orientation to Athabasca University was seen by some as a deficiency in the University's current services. A decrease in adverse criticism from a public that has sampled Athabasca University courses and thereafter became informed purveyors of information about the University may be an important side benefit of the programs for a University which is relatively unknown.

Examination of the entry characteristics of student participants in the programs indicated that the home-study program was used by a relatively high proportion of male students. Reaching students who would ordinarily not seek help was an intended outcome of both programs. However, the degree to which male students would participate in the home-study program was not expected.

A limitation in the search for unintended or side effects was the absence of an independent searcher. The bias of the program developer and evaluator were clearly involved in determining what to look for, how to look, and what to make of the information available.

In conclusion, a search for unintended or side effects through questioning of Athabasca University staff who reviewed the programs as well as counsellors and students participating in the programs indicated (a) that there may be established a "sense of community" among students in workshops that could serve as a basis for establishing greater student contact, (b) that workshop leaders also benefited from the broader perspective on student characteristics and concerns gained from observing the group process, (c) that the home-study program was especially useful in reaching students ordinarily not inclined to seek help, and (d) that students perceive the lack of an orientation to Athabasca University as a deficiency in the services available.

Process: Evidence presented on this dimension is meant to substantiate or invalidate the claim of performing a described process.

The goals specified for each of the programs were based on Haverkamp's (1980, 1983) model for orientation programs. This model contends that an orientation program should lead to gains in (a) information about the academic institution, (b) understanding of self in relation to the demands of the institution, and (c) awareness of needed skills. Placing this model within the context of Athabasca University, these goals were broken down into the following sub-goals. Information about the academic institution included information on the distance educational system, the student population, and on university resources available to students. Understanding of self in relation to the demands of the institution involved information and assessment of personal characteristics related to requirements of distance education and of situational or social concerns related to the impact of a return to student life. Awareness of needed skills included communication and planning with significant others, learning and study skills, and self-maintenance of motivation. Gains in awareness or knowledge related to these goals was presumed to depend on the processes used to effect these goals.

The sources of information used to provide evidence on this dimension included (a) detailed program descriptions, and an *Instructor's Guide* for the workshop, (b) student response to the programs, (c) expert evaluation of programs effectiveness in achieving the specified goals, and (d) solicited and unsolicited submissions by reviewers external to Athabasca University.

Detailed program descriptions are presented in Appendices and Chapter 3. The home-study program is open to inspection as is the workshop format and *Instructor's Guide* (see Appendices E, F and G). Consideration of the learning processes involved in each of the two programs suggested that the workshop's experiential processes may have provided a more powerful learning experience than the self-instructional reading material used in the home-study program. Evidence for estimating just how fully students receiving the home-study program actually used the program were based on the 70 percent return rate of home-study program evaluations.

Student response to components of the programs also provided some evidence of the perceived impact of program content. These responses suggested that students saw these programs as providing them with (a) an increased awareness of issues related to effective planning for a return to school, (b) ideas about specific coping skills that may be applicable for them, and (c) new information useful in planning for university (see Table 4). Virtually all participants said that either "to a large extent" or "to some extent" they received increased awareness and increased "skills, approaches and techniques" useful for returning to school. Workshop participants reported a somewhat greater gain than home-study program students. In absence of assessment of actual gains as compared to reported gains, the question of whether or not an inclination to respond with a positive social response bias in this group interaction climate is unknown.

On an overall evaluation of the two programs all but one of the participants responded that the programs were "excellent" or "good" in meeting their needs. The workshop participants responded somewhat more positively than the home-study participants.

Responses to open ended questions suggested that participants had become better informed, had done some self assessment of their potential as university students, and had become more aware of some needed coping strategies. (See Appendices K and L for complete student response.)

The third source of evidence related to substantiation or invalidation of the claim of performing a described process was expert judgment of how well each program achieved its goals. The experts internal to Athabasca University were chosen to represent administrators, academic staff, tutors, and counsellors. They included the Vice President, Academic, the Director of the Northern Regional Office, the Coordinator of Regional Services, a psychology coordinator, one counsellor and two staff members who served as both counsellors and tutors.

The ratings given to the "Expert Judge Questionnaire on Evaluation of Needs and of Goals Achievement" (see Table 5) indicated that both programs were rated as between "good and fairly comprehensive" and "minimally acceptable" in achieving all of the specified goals. Workshop ratings were slightly higher than home-study program ratings, seven out of twelve goals was given a rating of 4 ("good and fairly comprehensive") or above. In home-study program effectiveness ratings, five out of twelve goals was given a rating of 4 or above.

The fourth source of information consisted of the solicited and unsolicited responses of external reviewers. These included experienced evaluators of British Open University programs, mature student advisors from several Alberta post-secondary institutions, and a reference in a recent publication (Meichenbaum, 1985) to the home-study program.

Evaluators from the Open University in Great Britain suggested that the program content was focused on appropriate goals and that the presentation was appealing. They also suggested that the direct approach to personal issues would be un-British and therefore questionable for their students but possibly appropriate for our culture. The suggestion was also made that the home-study program assumes a capacity for self-directed activity that, while espoused as characteristic of adult learners, may be an unwarranted assumption. External reviewers within Alberta and British Columbia have come through word-of-mouth. Although very positive about the program and the issues addressed, these reviewers are likely to express a positive evaluation in addressing the program developer. However, the receipt of twenty-three requests for the home-study program and the *Instructors Guide* to the workshop was considered evidence of interest if not approval of the programs.

The final expert judgment considered was directed to the component of the program on self maintenance of motivation, the final section of the workshop and home-study program. Although a very brief introduction to stress inoculation training, it was cited as an application of this approach by a leading proponent of this procedure (Meichenbaum, 1985).

In conclusion, detailed program description, student response, expert judge ratings and external reviews support the contention that the programs involved processes likely to increase participants (a) information about Athabasca University, (b) assessment of themselves in relation to the requirements of Athabasca University and, (c) awareness of skills or approaches useful in dealing with typical problems faced by students.

Causation: Evidence that the effects reported could not reasonably be attributed to something other than the treatment.

Assessment of causation was done through a quasi-experimental design as outlined in Chapter IV. Results obtained include measurement of course progress and course completion for the experimental program groups and the no-program comparison group.

Examination of the entry characteristics of voluntary participants to the two experimental programs revealed that the populations were not equivalent on relevant characteristics. By combining the two experimental groups, similarity in population characteristics were obtained between the experimental and no-program groups except for a remaining difference in average time since last enrollment in formal education. On this factor the experimental groups were characterized by longer periods since last enrolled - a possible negative volunteer bias.

Evidence of program effects through student self-report (Tables 4, 6, 7, 8) and through interview observations benefited from the availability of a comparison group. Results of outcome measures on course progress were given in Table 17, tests of statistical significance are given below.

In conclusion, evidence that the effects reported in this study could not reasonably be attributed to something other than the treatment program was based on the use of a quasi-experimental design. Limitations in the use of a comparison rather than a control group were offset to the extent possible by careful analysis of the experimental and comparison group characteristics.

Statistical Significance: Evidence that an appropriate statistical test of significance has been applied to the data used to support the claim that the effects are attributed to the treatment.

Based on the nature of the data and assumptions made, a chi square test of statistical significance was used. This test compares two or more independent proportions obtained from dichotomous data. The formula used was:

$$X^2 = \frac{N(AD - BC)^2}{(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)}$$

Application of a chi square test to course progress rates of the no-program and home-study groups reveals there was not a statistically significant difference between the course progress results of these groups (chi square 1.93, 1 df, and $p < .15$). The chi square applied to the course progress rates of the no-program and workshop also reveals a lack of statistically significant difference between these groups (chi square 1.64, 1 df, and $p < .17$). Course progress rates of the two treatment groups were virtually identical.

In conclusion, an appropriate test of statistical significance was used. Differences in the program effects were not sufficiently great to indicate with a confidence level of .05 that the treatment and comparison groups were, in fact, different as a result of the treatment intervention. Differences in course progress results were, however, sufficiently great to suggest further study is warranted.

Cost and Cost-Effectiveness: Evidence that a comprehensive analysis of costs and cost-benefit analysis be done as systematically as possible, preferably by a trained, independent consultant. Comparative costs of critical competitors should be presented.

The assessment of costs was made by considering the direct costs of each program as well as the costs of periodic revisions to the video and audio tapes (estimated as every ten years) and to the printed Guidebook (every three years). The costs were based on the results of the field trial which indicated that approximately 20 percent of new students would use one of the two programs if offered within a few weeks of admission. On the basis of 4000 new admissions per year, a projection of sixteen workshops per year with an average attendance of eighteen participants in each workshop was made.

Estimated costs for improvements to current the current video tape, *Telling It Like It Is*, and production of a new video tape in ten years was \$6000.00. Updating and revising the printed home-study program every three years was estimated to be \$3,000.00. For the field trial, the audiotrack of the video served as the audio-cassette which accompanies the home-study guidebook. Costs for this production were distributed between the two programs. Since the cost of producing an audio tape is small compared to video production, the home-study program share of the video production was set at ten percent or \$600.00. Staff salary cost was based on a time estimate of seven hours for each four hour workshop at a rate of $200.00 (salary plus benefits) per day.

Opportunity costs or estimates of alternative services which could have been offered by the workshop leader during the seven hours spent on the workshop was considered although benefits of each kind of service did not readily lend themselves to cost-benefit analysis. During this period a counsellor would typically see five clients individually. Serving eighteen clients in a group setting may be seen as more efficient and, in some ways, more productive. In practice, however, this group experience probably did not replace individual contact hours with a counsellor. The group experience was generally seen as having a value not comparable to that gained in individual contact. The benefit to counsellors of having an orientation program to which prospective students could be referred was seen as of value to both students and counselling staff. The cost of the service to students was, however, more readily estimated than the benefits to the counselling staff.

The following cost breakdown provides estimates of the relative costs of the workshop and home-study programs on a perparticipant basis given the assumptions related to numbers of new admissions and revisions stated above.

Workshop: Cost per Participant

(Based on holding sixteen four hour workshops per year with each workshop having eighteen participants.)

Workshop leader salary (one day at $200.00 per day)	$11.11
Video production costs (amortized over ten years)	$ 2.08
Workshop Materials	$ 1.25
Promotion costs	$ 1.70
Total cost per participant	$16.14

Home-Study: Cost per Participant

(Based on 512 participants per year)

Home-study guidebook printing cost	$1.25
Cassette	$1.25
Update and revisions to guidebook (Estimated at $1,000.00 per year)	$1.93
Audio production cost (Amortized over ten years)	$ .12
Postage	$ .68
Promotion costs	$1.70
Total cost per participant	$6.98

Individual Counselling Sessions: Cost per Participant

(Based on one hour per client)

Counsellor salary (Estimated at $30.00 per hour cost to the University in salary and benefits)	$30.00
Total cost per participant	$30.00

Total Cost of Each Program per Year

Workshops (based on 288 participants @ $16.14)	$4,648.32
Home-Study Program (based on 521 participants @ $6.98)	$3,573.76
Total Program Costs per Year	$8,222.08
*adding 15% improvement cost	$1,233.31
	$9,455.39
Less portion of cost already committed to staff salaries	$4,260.00
Actual addition to base budget for continuing the programs	$5,195.39

Estimates of costs were obtained, and were provided on a cost per capita basis for each program. Because each program attracts somewhat different segments of the population, the programs must be viewed as complementary rather than competing in some respects. The cost of the home-study program was smaller ($ 6.98 per participant). This program also has the advantages of being accessible to all Athabasca students and of not being dependent on the presence of professional staff. The workshop program costs somewhat more ($ 17.26 per participant) but was favored by a substantial number of students and was considered to have benefits for both student and staff participants that exceed those of the home-study program. The relative cost of these programs was small compared to one-to-one counselling which was the prevailing alternative prior to the development of these programs. The video tape and the promotion costs constitute a relatively high proportion of the total cost. Each was seen as critical to the program and no less costly alternative was available. The costs of not providing services to students was not attached to a dollar value but must be considered.

Extended Support: Evidence that a plan exists for updating and upgrading a program in the light of formative evaluation experience. Recent evaluation literature suggests heavy emphasis be placed here on the methods used to insure a receptive audience.

The dimension required that efforts be made to insure a responsive audience and, thereby, extended support for the programs should the results of the evaluation justify continued support for the program as it stands or for improvements which appear indicated on the basis of the field experience. Evidence that such efforts were made rests on (a) budget submissions for program updating, (b) involvement of administrators, academic staff, and counsellors as judges of program content and program effectiveness, (c) involvement of counselling staff in setting program goals and in participating as workshop leaders, and (d) plans for evaluation reports focused on expressed concerns of administrators and of counselling staff and (e) plans for supporting student groups formed at the workshops.

Involvement of expert judges representing several functions within Athabasca University in early stages of the evaluation was intended to increase their interest in the programs as well as to obtain their perspective on the programs. Issues raised at this point were subsequently addressed in the evaluation process.

Counselling staff were involved in initial planning of the programs, especially in determining program goals. Further involvement in the video and guidebook production as well as in establishing a workshop format was widespread throughout the counselling staff as interests, responsibilities and workloads permitted. All received student evaluations of the two programs and most assisted with workshops.

Reports on student demand and student response to the orientation programs were presented to counselling staff whose primary concern was with program effectiveness while information on student demand and on program costs were addressed to administrators concerned with budget decisions.

In conclusion, reasonable efforts were made to include decision makers responsible for future support of the program as involved participants in the evaluation process. Efforts were made to focus evaluation reports on the information needs of the audience receiving the reports. Projection of costs for updating and upgrading the programs on the basis of the evaluation data was submitted to appropriate administrators. Further development of support was anticipated at the conclusion of the study.

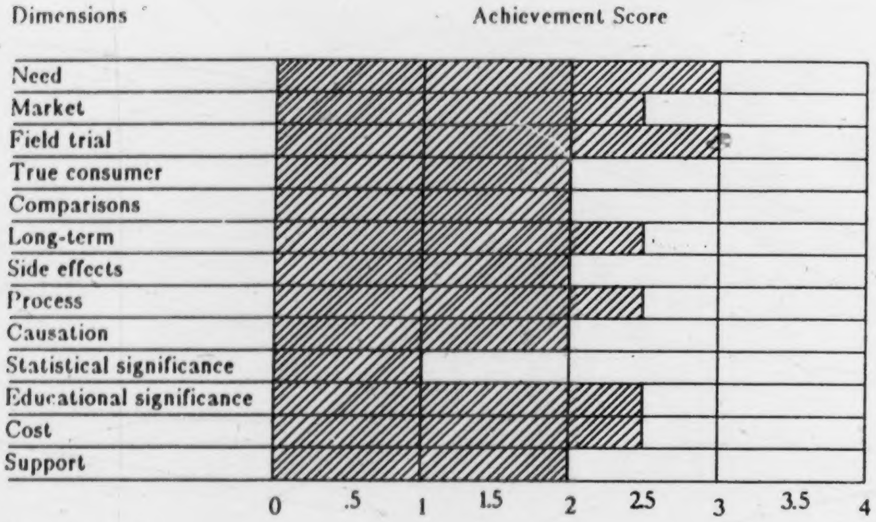
Educational Significance: Evidence that a synthesis of information on need, market, field trials, consumers, crucial comparisons, long-term effects, side effects, process, causation, and statistical significance has been done. This required looking "below the surface requirements of statistical significance to the deep requirement that the actual gains match significant needs" (Popham, 1974, p. 19).

The synthesis required for this dimension was approached through the rating scale presented below as well as through the discussion and recommendations made in Chapter VI. The rating scale is recommended by Scriven as a means of pinpointing assessment of each evaluative dimension and arriving at an overall judgment. It is at this point that arguments for the irrelevance of a dimension for the study undertaken are to be made if judged appropriate by the evaluator. The following ratings were made by the investigator.

Figure 2

Product Profile Evaluation:

Evaluation Rating Summary



Note: Ratings are those made by the investigator according to the criteria proposed by Scriven (1974).

General Dimension Rating Scale

0 = no support

1 = possible or marginal support

2 = acceptable support

3 = large degree of support

4 = very large degree of support

Comments on rating of dimensions:

1. *Need:* Good evidence of need presented from many perspectives

2. *Market:* Market clearly demonstrated. Resources subject to vagaries of University reorganization plans.

3. *Field trial:* Realistic trial done. Has continued with only minor changes.

4. *Consumer:* Missing non-responders (30 percent of home-study participants). These may be very important consumer groups.

5. *Comparison:* Limited data on alternative programs. Created competitive program useful but found to be more complementary than competitive. Difficult to conceive of less costly competitors.

6. *Long-Term:* Self-report evidence and course progress measures provide some evidence at least satisfactory for reasonable support.

7. *Side Effects:* Limited evidence on non-responders.

8. *Process:* Congruence checks good. Missing behavioral assessment; balanced by self-report evidence and outcome measures.

9. *Causation:* Quasi-experimental design presents plausible argument for causation of effects.

10. *Statistical Significance:* Significant differences not found in course progress. Differences found suggest further study warranted.

11. *Educational significance:* Reasonable evidence that gains were made in satisfying some real need.

12. *Cost:* Estimates suggest costs lower than current alternatives. Cost of not providing programs an important consideration.

13. *Support:* Uncertain. Needs development.

Despite the absence of statistically significant differences in outcome measurement of course progress between experimental and comparison group students, evidence on all other dimensions indicated at least acceptable evidence for the conclusion that there was a real need and market for the programs and that the programs were effective in satisfying genuine needs. Viewed as a summative evaluation, the results warrant a recommendation for continuance of the programs. Viewed as formative evaluation, the results are sufficiently positive to indicate that further efforts toward refinement and development of program components is justified.

Chapter VI

Summary, Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

The specific problem that gave rise to this study was the discrepancy between the expectation that an open-admission distance university "should provide the majority of adults ... with a natural and welcome environment for learning" (Moore, 1972, p. 87) and the evidence that the majority of new students in the distance education system offered by Athabasca University were dropping out with little or no progress made on their courses. Similar early attrition was characteristic of students in other distance universities as well as adult students in conventional universities.

The timing and nature of concerns related to adult re-entry into formal education and concerns related to adaptation to a distance university system provided support for an early intervention focused on a broad range of issues.

This concern about attrition by adults entering Athabasca University was consequently addressed through development of preventive "package" interventions, i.e., orientation programs focused on helping students anticipate and plan coping strategies for dealing with typical concerns faced by this population. A package treatment approach was chosen as a pragmatic and ethical alternative for the setting involved and as a first step in a dismantling research strategy (Azrin, 1977, 1979). This strategy requires evaluation of program components that could be developed or refined in further efforts to define more effective treatment programs. A particular issue involved was whether such a program could be developed for distance delivery.

The question of program effectiveness was approached through application of an evaluation methodology. Evaluation criteria put forward by Michael Scriven and used as guidelines for this study include emphases on triangulation (Greene & McClintock, 1985), quantitative and qualitative methods and data, consideration of the perceptions of all consumers (i.e., policy makers as well as the targeted population), cost-effectiveness, and, in accordance with Popper's demand (Serlin & Lapsley, 1985), establishment in advance of the criteria for acceptance of program effectiveness. It was argued that this approach serves the purpose of scientist-practitioners in natural settings by providing comprehensive information on many dimensions of ideographic data, indications of specific program effectiveness in a particular context. Transferability of knowledge gained through such methodology is not dependent on exact duplication of the experimental conditions but on having explicit and detailed evidence about the conditions in which the study took place with the resulting possibility of another practicioner or researcher rationally assessing whether similar conditions hold in another circumstance in which the information obtained may apply (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Guba, 1978; House, 1986).

Program Development

Program objectives. The programs developed were based on needs for early intervention, for programs acceptable to adult students (i.e., programs based on common concerns and focused on building competencies rather than remediating problems), for programs accessible to a geographically dispersed student population, and for programs focused on significant concerns of adult distance university students. To achieve these purposes a self-instructional home-study program and a workshop program were developed. The approach used in the programs was preventive, that is, aimed at assisting students in anticipating potential problems and strengths and using this knowledge in preparing themselves for working toward their educational goals. The objective was to bridge an apparent gap in the preparation of students entering Athabasca University and thus to take a first step in the process of overcoming problems that appeared to be related to attrition.

Program design. The strategy used in program design was a problem-oriented rather than a method-oriented approach (Azrin, 1977). Use of a treatment package having a multi-faceted treatment approach, with each component of the treatment chosen because it is a reasonable and ethical approach, has considerable support in current treatment outcome research (Kazdin, 1983; Kendall & Norton-From, 1982). Rigor in specification of the context and participant characteristics as well as in process variables becomes critical in making reasonable assumptions necessary to formative evaluation on which a dismantling and constructive treatment strategy depends. The treatment package used in the programs developed for this study contained a variety of techniques including elements of didactic instruction, modeling, individual and group self-assessment and problem solving. Issues dealt with were (a) knowledge of the Athabasca University system, (b) assessment of the appropriateness of this system for the individual student, and (c) knowledge of potential problems and problem solutions.

Program design within the context of Athabasca University placed constraints on development options. The geographical spread of students throughout Canada required an affordable program that could be provided to students not having access to regional offices of the University.

The open admission policy and consequent great diversity in educational background characteristic of Athabasca's student population required an approach that focused on relevant issues in a way which neither assumed extensive familiarity with university work nor "talked down" to those having a strong university background.

Athabasca University's year-round admission policy posed further constraints on the workshop program design. The need for presentation of orientation programs within a short time after registration required monthly workshops. Low course enrollment periods could, however, be expected to result in low workshop enrollments. The diminished opportunity for group process and the increased per student cost of staff resources during low-enrollment periods presents some cost-effectiveness implications for workshop presentation. The alternative home-study program remained a feasible option for all students during the entire year.

Evaluation Approach

Evaluation of program effectiveness was based on an approach proposed by Michael Scriven (1974). This approach requires evidence of program effectiveness based on the determination of need, market, results of a field trial, consumer perspectives on effectiveness, comparison with competitive programs, long term effects, side effects, congruity of program process with program goals, causation as based on research design if possible, statistical significance, educational or practical significance, cost-effectiveness, and availability of extended support for the program if warranted. Evaluation efforts were consequently directed not only toward determination of outcome effects but toward a comprehensive search for process and outcome variables which might shed light on the nature of the problems experienced by students and identify program components requiring revision.

Major Conclusions

Application of Scriven's thirteen evaluative criteria to the preventive orientation programs developed to alleviate the "induction crises" in adults returning to formal education in a distance university indicated there was sufficient evidence to suggest the programs were a step in the direction of serving the purpose for which they were designed and that continued support for the current programs and contained efforts to refine and expand the programs were warranted. Major findings follow.

Program utilization. Information on the rate of program utilization and on the characteristics of the student population choosing to participate in the programs was useful both as an indication of program effectiveness and as an indication of which students viewed each of the programs as meeting their needs. The results indicated that within an urban area the home-study program attracted a high proportion of male students and a high proportion of students with university background. The workshop program attracted a high proportion of female students and a low proportion of students with university background. Both programs attracted students who had been away from formal education for longer periods than was typical of Athabasca University's student population. This information on program participants was useful in placing other comparative evaluation results of the two programs into perspective.

The rate of utilization of each of the programs when random invitations were offered was between 21 and 22 percent for both programs. This rate of utilization was high for programs of this type and suggest the programs were seen as useful and were acceptably promoted. Questionnaire results indicate that when choice of programs was available, there was a greater demand for workshops than for home-study programs within the urban area sampled.

Immediate and intermediate self-report outcome measures. Both the home-study and workshop programs appeared to meet some needs of incoming students at Athabasca University. Student participants in both programs in contrast to no-program students indicated they felt more knowledgeable about the Athabasca University system, had more information relevant to assessing whether Athabasca University was appropriate for them, and had a greater awareness of some typical concerns of adults entering a distance university as well as awareness of some possible solutions for those concerns. This greater degree of preparedness was assessed at two or three points over a five month period following program participation or, for the comparison group, course registration.

Process and interview assessment. Student self-report observations were similar to counsellor assessment in interviews held five months after registration and to the assessment of student needs and effectiveness of the programs in meeting those needs made by University "expert judges" i.e., tutors, professors, administrators and counsellors. These observations converged in assessments indicating that all program components were adequately meeting the intended objectives but that further development of some components, e.g., coping with maintenance of motivation, was needed.

Long term follow-up, course progress measures. The programs also appeared to serve the purpose of assisting participating students in getting started with their course work, thereby reducing the likelihood of attrition. Although differences between program and no-program students in course progress did not reach statistical significance, greater course progress on the part of the program participants was sufficient to suggest that further study was warranted.

At ten to twelve months following registration, approximately half the students who had participated in the programs had either completed their course work or progressed to the point of having completed recorded assignments or examinations. The same level of course progress was evident for approximately one-third of the no-program comparison students. This advantage achieved in course progress occurred despite evidence that the experimental program students had been out of school for longer periods of time than had the no-program students. The relatively high educational background of students choosing the home-study program brings into question the relative contributing effect of previous academic background as opposed to program effects. The relatively low educational background and longer periods of time since last enrollment in formal education characteristic of workshop participants suggested a stronger influence of program effects for this group.

Observations on program components. Self-maintenance of motivation was identified by students as well as Athabasca University staff as a major difficulty for students engaged in the distance program provided by Athabasca University. Workshop participants saw themselves and were seen by counsellors as experiencing less difficulty with this problem than either home-study or no-program students at five months following course registration. This suggests that efforts toward further development of coping skills such as the stress inoculation techniques currently in the programs may be usefully continued or developed further.

Side effects. New admissions to Athabasca University interviewed after five months of experience with the University identified the need to have been better informed about the Athabasca University system and see this as a responsibility of Athabasca University. Knowledge about resources available was insufficient to insure that this information was obtained at the point at which it would have been of value. The cost to both the public and the University of not insuring, to the extent possible, adequate information and preparation for Athabasca University's distance education system should not be overlooked.

Discussion

The program and evaluation strategies used in this study led to some expected and some unexpected findings which may have implications for further program development and evaluation within Athabasca University as well as for contexts in which similar concerns are addressed.

The self-selection process revealed that the alternate comparative programs were different in ways not previously anticipated. The attraction of the self-instructional home-study program to a predominately male and typically reluctant help-seeking population was not anticipated. The value of a more personally distant and possibly less threatening form of assistance to male students may be useful to consider in other services focused on this population.

The convergence in the views of administrators, counselling professionals, and students on student needs and on the helpfulness of the orientation programs in meeting those needs was an expected but reassuring and useful finding. Assurance that there exists substantial agreement between the direct consumers of student services and the professionals and administrators providing and supporting those services should provide a basis for agreement on continuing and developing those services.

As was expected, the findings provide evidence that the timing, content, and approach of a preventive orientation intervention at the initiation of an academic program seems to be a point of entry where many concerns, misconceptions, and planning deficiencies occur. Although not readily identified as problems at that point by incoming students, a few months of experience as students indicated the issues addressed do surface for many students at a point where remedial action may not appear promising. The benefits of preventive as opposed to remedial interventions was reinforced by the reception of students in this study and suggests that this approach be considered in future program development for adult student populations.

The reception of students to a self-instructional booklet with an accompanying audio cassette was generally positive, a somewhat unexpected finding for practitioners whose experience is primarily with face-to-face helping services. Reaction to this distance program suggests that such distance delivery methods of serving a student population may be underutilized. The heterogeneity of distance university student populations and the self-selection process which occurred in utilizing the face-to-face and distance programs suggests that provision of diversity in type of program and delivery of services is necessary to be responsive to student needs and necessary to insure truly accessible resources for students in these contexts. Cost-effectiveness of services is also an important issue. As psychologists increasingly serve a population which is attracted to self-help programs for many aspects of personal development, such distance delivery of psychoeducational assistance for commonly expressed concerns may be usefully explored.

Institutional concerns about the causes of attrition in distance education cannot easily be explored through controlled studies of an accessible and captive population nor through the accumulation of many informal staff-student interactions and observations. The identification of student needs and of remediable problems in a diverse student population such as that at Athabasca University is a complex task requiring a multi-perspective evaluation approach. On the mailed survey of students in this study, nearly all students stated that they found the services offered by Athabasca University to be "good and comprehensive" in meeting their needs. Yet a few months later, during the course of semi-structured interview on their experiences as Athabasca University students, three out of seven students who had not participated in an orientation program stated they were initially uninformed and suggested that Athabasca University and by implications, institutions providing non-traditional education should make some kind of orientation available or even compulsory.

The data on student use of institutional resources and student response to the orientation programs developed for this study suggest that assessment of student needs and evaluations of student services in adult education may place too much reliance on the image of students as self-directed responsible adults who will seek out needed assistance as required. This view may fail to consider the large number of adult students who need to present an appearance of being self-directed, competent and independent but who hope somebody will recognize when they need help and offer that help in a non-threatening way. A sensitive pro-active and preventive stance in the provision of services may prove useful for the latter group, a group which may well constitute a major proportion of Athabasca University's student population as well as that of other institutions serving adult students.

Lastly, as a matter of public policy, if one accepts the evidence that there is a demonstrated need and market for orientation programs for students in a relatively new and unfamiliar university such as Athabasca University and further, accepts the argument that students have a right to know and the University has a responsibility to provide adequate information upon which the public may make informed choices regarding entry to the University, then efforts to determine the most cost-effective means of presenting a useful orientation is required. This study may serve as a step in meeting that need and that responsibility.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - The orientation programs developed for this study should be maintained and developed as further formative evaluation of the programs suggests needed changes. Extension of program components relating to development of skills, especially those focused on maintaining self-motivation, should be developed. Evaluation of the programs with greater emphasis on the differential effect of each program component should continue.

Recommendation 2 - Athabasca University needs to obtain further in-depth information on student characteristics, student needs, and on the adequacy and appropriateness of services to students. A comprehensive evaluation program to examine current practices and future initiatives is required to develop worthwhile services that will serve to help students use the educational opportunities offered.

Recommendation 3 - As more information becomes available on the characteristics and needs of the Athabasca University student population (see Recommendation 2) this information should be used in providing better assessment services for students considering entry to the University.

Recommendation 4 - Efforts should be made to increase the accessibility and approachability of staff resources to students. Listing of resources in printed material has been insufficient to ensure their usefulness to students; methods of increasing comfortable, non-threatening contact with staff should be investigated as a means of enhancing the educational opportunities provided by the University as well as in creating a sense of community which is currently lacking.

Recommendation 5 - Efforts to encourage opportunities for student contact through social and peer support groups as a means of increasing motivation, providing peer support and reassurance, increasing the information network available to students, and establishing a sense of being part of the University system should be explored.

Summary

The evaluation of the orientation programs developed for incoming students at Athabasca University suggests that both the distance delivered self-instructional program and the face-to-face workshop program served some needs of a substantial proportion of new students and were cost-effective compared to the alternative of individual counselling.

The preventive package program approach aimed at common transitional problems of adults re-entering formal education could serve as the first stage of a dismantling and reconstructive research strategy with the goal of constructing more effective program interventions for students entering the distance education program offered by Athabasca University. The results of both process and outcome measures as assessed through the use of Scriven's evaluation guidelines provided sufficient information on participants, contextual issues, program details, and outcome measures to serve as a source of data on which to plan further refinement of programs for Athabasca University and to serve as a source of information by which practitioners and researchers dealing with adults in similar contexts may make rational assessments regarding the applicability and transferability of findings to their settings.

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Appendix A

Home-Study Program Announcement Covering Letter

Athabasca University

Northern Regional Office
Serving students in the Edmonton area
and the university in Northern Alberta

Dear

Our records indicate that you have recently become a student at Athabasca University. We would like to welcome you and to offer you the assistance of the Student Services Unit.

Many Athabasca University students are adults who are returning to school after some time away from formal education, If you are facing this transition, we strongly encourage you to obtain from Student Services a self-instructional Orientation Guidebook with an accompanying audio tape. The Guidebook is focused on helping students anticipate some of the problems and concerns frequently encountered by adult students. As well, the Guidebook and the students interviewed on the audio tape suggest some coping strategies which may prove helpful in easing your transition to student life. A brief description of the Orientation Guidebook as well as some student reactions to the Guidebook are enclosed.

If this Orientation Guidebook sounds useful to you please contact us at 432-1550 and we will send this material to you.

There is no charge for this material. We do, however, request a return of the audio tape in the stamped envelope that will be enclosed in the package of materials.

Sincerely,

Rosalyn Delehanty
Counsellor & Research/Evaluation Coordinator

RD:ejs

10324-82 (Whyte) Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. T6E 1Z8
Telephone: (403) 432-1550

Appendix B

Workshop Program Announcement Covering Letter

Athabasca University

Dear

Our records indicate that you have recently become a student at Athabasca University. We would like to welcome you and to offer you the assistance of the Student Services Unit.

Many Athabasca University students are adults who are returning to school after some time away from formal education. If you are facing this transition, we strongly encourage you to participate in an Orientation Workshop for new students. The workshop is focused on helping students anticipate some of the problems and concerns frequently encountered by adult students. A brief description of the Orientation Workshop as well as some student reactions to the workshop are enclosed.

If this workshop sounds useful to you please call us at 432-1550 to register.

Sincerely,

Rosalyn Delehanty
Counsellor & Research/Evaluation Coordinator

RD/gc

15015-123 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5V 1J7 Telephone (403) 452 9990 Telex 037 41714

Appendix C

Home-Study Program Announcement

Athabasca University

Edmonton Office 10324-82 (Whyte) Avenue
For more information, call 432-1550.

HELP YOURSELF!

To The Student Orientation at Athabasca University

At Athabasca University, we believe each student should have the best possible chance to succeed in courses--and that belief means the Unviersity has made a commitment to help students.

Knowing how to work through the challenges facing adult students--and feel satisfaction in the process--is a key part of realizing success. There's a way the University can help you and other students prepare for student life--through an orientation session designed to meet your special needs.

No matter what your educational background or age, this orientation will help you become more aware of important elements of the learning process. In short, the orientation will help prepare you for returning to student life.

You'll learn about...

- Specifying the advantages and disadvantages of distance education
- Successfully adding the role of student to your other roles in life
- Studying efficiently
- Self-motivation and how you can influence it
- Support from the university--such as tutors and counsellors--that can help you in your studies

...all in the comfort of your own home. We will send the orientation materials to you, and talk with you by telephone about any questions you may have.

Student participants have commented:

"The Guidebook and tape are excellent is providing knowledge and making people realize the problems they may face in returning to an educational process. It also gives more support in overcoming hurdles to be faced."

"It is good for one to see that there are ways to help oneself and to receive help if needed."

"I think your orientation program should be a pre-requisite for everyone considering AU and in particular those who have not had any post-secondary education. To do well, potential students need to be fully informed as to what they are getting themselves in It's a long, hard haul, but with the proper attitude and preparation, how better can you help students to succeed."

"I wish I had read the Guidebook prior to starting my course. It would have given me a much better appreciation of what I was taking on and of the change in lifestyle that I would have to forego."

Orientation Guidebook's are available by calling 432-1550

Appendix D

Workshop Program Announcement

Athabasca University

Edmonton Office 10324-82 (Whyte) Avenue
For more information, call 432-1550.

HELP YOURSELF!

To The Student Orientation at Athabasca University

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- Specifying the advantage and disadvantages of distance education
- Successfully adding the role of student to your other roles in life
- Studying efficiently
- Self-motivation and how you can influence it
- Support from the university—such as tutors and counsellors—that can help you in your studies

...all in a relaxed atmosphere that will give you a chance both to listen to your orientation leader and to share ideas with others.

Student participants have commented:

"For those who have not studied for some time, it is a great introduction."

"A good motivator and good for information purposes. Definitely worth while attending."

"I found that this workshop has helped me become more aware of the activities involved in becoming a student again. Just getting together with other students gives me a refreshing new outlook on life and educational growth."

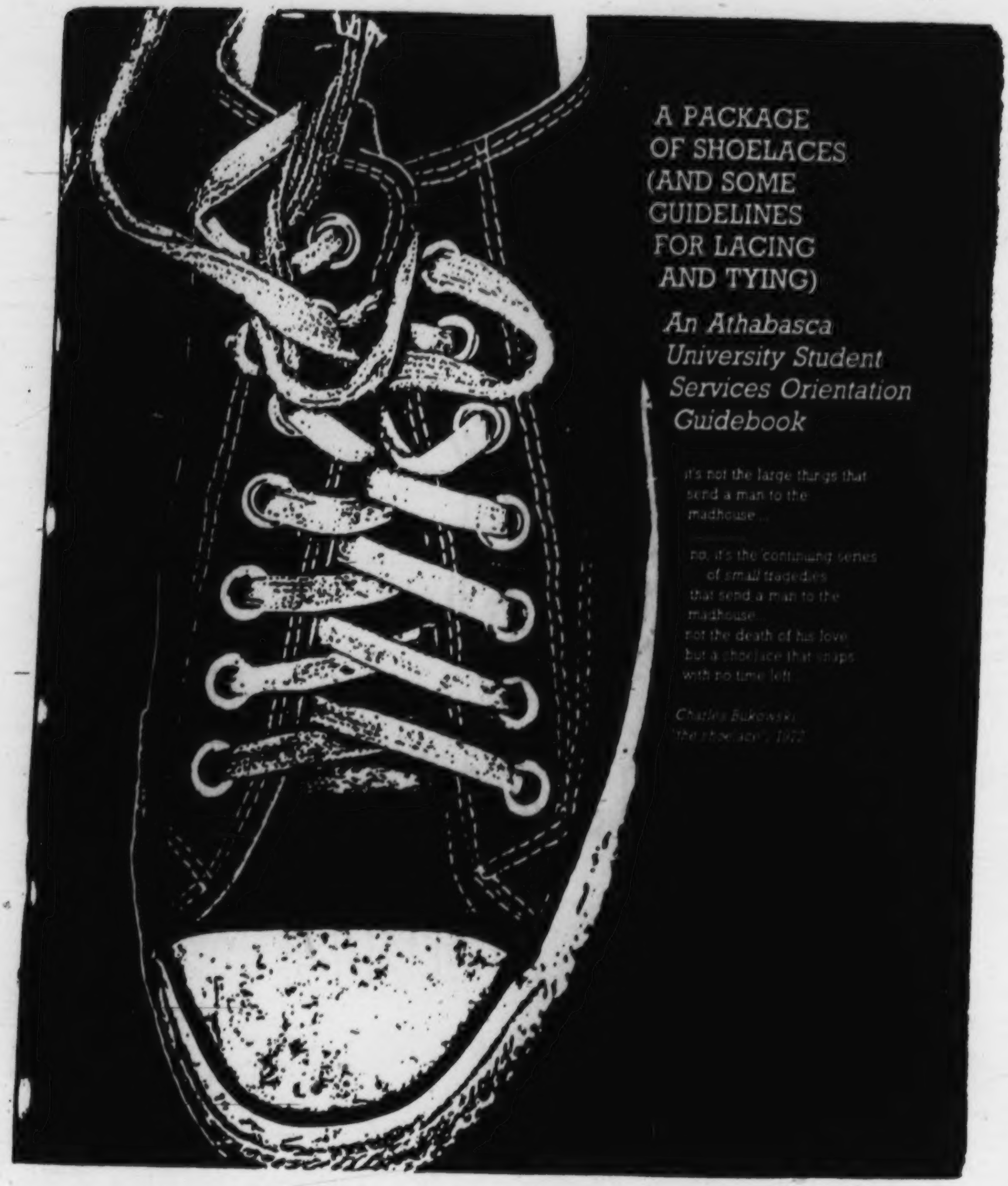
"This is an excellent way for people to understand problems that might come up and how to deal with them."

"This workshop has been beneficial in helping me determine whether I really want to do this--and whether I can do it now."

Call 432-1550 to register. No charge. Limited enrollment.

Appendix E

Home-Study Self-Instructional Orientation Guidebook



A PACKAGE
OF SHOELACES
(AND SOME
GUIDELINES
FOR LACING
AND TYING)

An Athabasca
University Student
Services Orientation
Guidebook

it's not the large things that
send a man to the
madhouse...

no, it's the continuing series
of *small* tragedies
that send a man to the
madhouse...
not the death of his love
but a shoelace that snaps
with no time left...

Charles Bukowski
"the shoelace", 1972

A PACKAGE OF SHOELACES (AND SOME GUIDELINES FOR LACING AND TYING)

An Athabasca University
Student Services
Orientation Guidebook

Athabasca University

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PART 1

ORIENTATION

Congratulations! You have not only decided to investigate a university level course or program, but you have also opted for the challenge of a distance mode of education. We are pleased to have you as a student, but recognize from our experience that not all students are fully aware of all that is involved or will be demanded of them as Athabasca University students.

You probably fit the description given of an adult student—a highly motivated, self-directed learner. This orientation guidebook is intended for students like you. It is also intended as a two-way communication device to help us in our efforts to orient future students.

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY → YOU	YOU → ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
To provide information and assistance in surviving as an Athabasca University student	To determine the needs and characteristics of students seeking education through Athabasca University

We would like to increase your knowledge of the personal factors involved in attending university through home-study, and help you anticipate a few of the problems you may encounter. Prevention is often far more effective than a cure!

We also want to know more about people, like you, who are considering distance education as an option. We need to know who you are and what experiences you have that will aid us in planning changes to our educational system and in orienting prospective students in a more realistic way. We will periodically be asking for your reactions to this orientation guidebook and to your experiences as a student as you proceed through your course work.

THE CHALLENGE

The possibility of obtaining a university education through home-study is a relatively new idea to North Americans. It has, however, become a very promising alternative for an increasingly large number of adults who wish to continue thier formal education without returning to student life on a conventional university campus. This type of education seems to require both *less* of people (i. e., no class attendance and no set schedule for completion of assignments) and *more* of people (i. e., self-discipline and a more independent approach to study). It is believed that self-paced study can be both the greatest *advantage* and the greatest *disadvantage* of distance education. We hope this orientation guidebook will provide you with some idea of what distance education is like and with some ideas on how to deal with a few of the demands that an adult distance university student must face.

Successful running of a race depends initially on moving your feet—feet that have been adequately shod with laced up shoes. You are the only one who can know if you have the desire or motivation to start running this race. We will provide you with some knowledge of the track you will run, and with a package of shoelaces in case you find yours are threatening to snap.

CHAPTER 1

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS: THE TRACK

OPEN ADMISSIONS AND HOME-STUDY COURSES

Athabasca University's mandate is to provide a university education to adults who cannot or choose not to attend a conventional university. By combining an open admissions policy with distance education methods, students find Athabasca University one of the most accessible universities anywhere. The open admissions policy permits anyone age 18 or over to register, no matter what their educational background. Assessment of some academic skills prior to registration may be available upon request to Student Services.

Athabasca University courses are specifically designed to facilitate an independent approach to study. Most courses are self-paced. Exams are taken at exam centres or by individually arranged supervision. Tutors are provided for each course a student takes. Assistance and discussion with your tutor may take place by telephone during regularly scheduled tutor hours.

THE UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE

A brief overview of the structure of Athabasca University may help you visualize where *you* as a student fit into the system.

STUDENT SERVICES

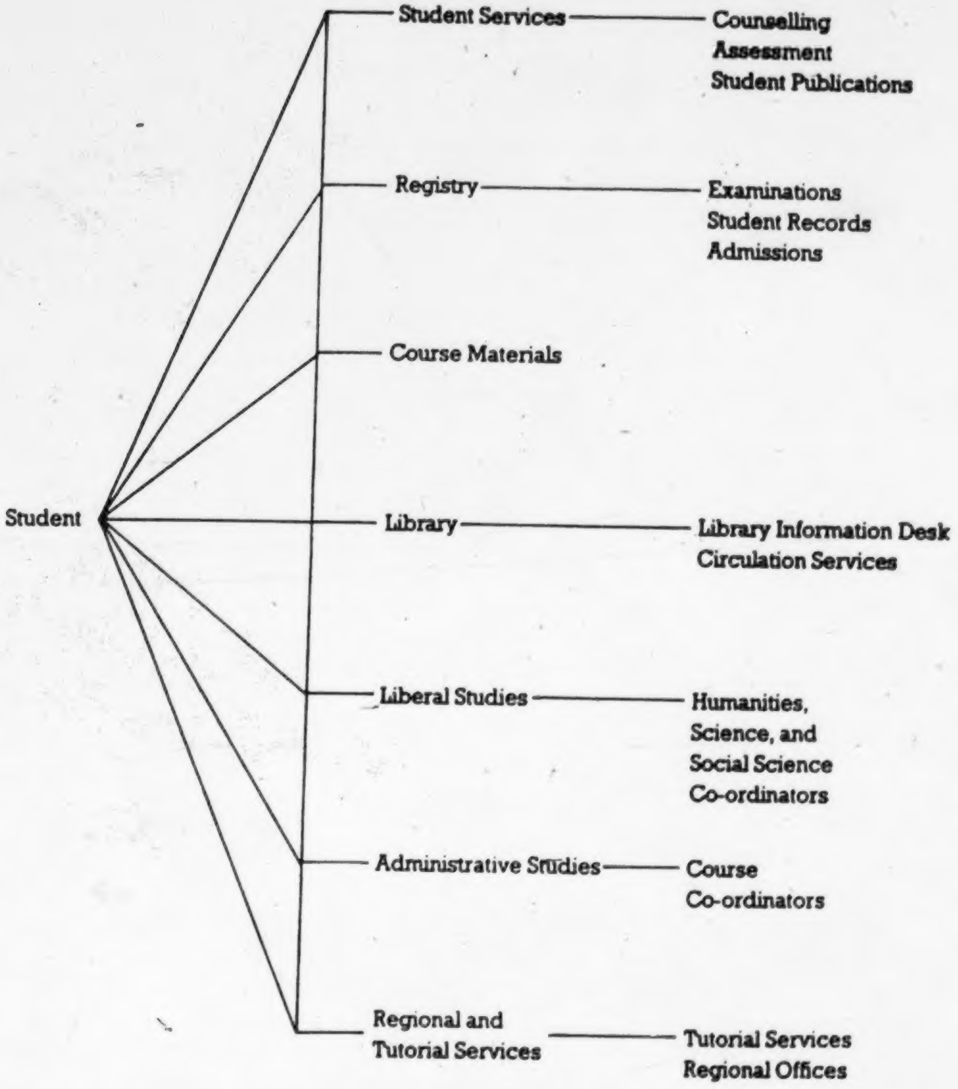
Because most people are unfamiliar with distance education, we suggest you make Student Services your first contact at Athabasca University. We will be able to discuss your course choice, go through course materials with you, and assist you in contacting a course co-ordinator for more detailed information on a course.

We urge you to consider carefully your plans to take on a university study program. You may wish to discuss in greater depth the issues outlined in this guidebook or any other issues that are relevant to you. Our purpose within the university is to help you attain your educational goals in whatever way we can.

The full range of services we offer includes:

- Information about Athabasca University and other post-secondary institutions
- Academic assessment and counselling
- Athabasca University program planning
- Career counselling
- Learning and study skills
- Information on financial assistance and student awards
- Personal counselling
- Complaint processing (unfortunately, we're not perfect yet, but if you let us know, we'll try to help you with the problem)

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE


Student
Student Services
Counselling
Assessment
Student Publications
Registry
Examinations
Student Records
Admissions
Course Materials
Library
Library Information Desk
Circulation Services
Liberal Studies
Humanities, Science, and Social Science Co-ordinators
Administrative Studies
Course Co-ordinators
Regional and Tutorial Services
Tutorial Services
Regional Offices

The *Calendar* and the *Student Handbook* contain vital facts upon which your survival as an Athabasca University student may depend. We urge you to become familiar with these publications. The Student Services staff at Athabasca University will be delighted to help you; call us in Athabasca at Zenith 22273 or (403) 675-6111, in Calgary at 262-4522, and in Edmonton at 432-1550.

Since our contact with most of you will be exclusively by telephone, we would like to introduce Student Services staff with brief descriptions. (See Appendix A for these profiles.)

THE REGISTRY

The Registry will be a focal point of many of your contacts with the university. The Registry handles questions regarding:

- Admissions
- Course registrations
- Transfer credit assessments
- Examinations
- Records

The *Calendar* and the *Student Handbook* also cover most questions students have about these matters.

COURSE MATERIALS

The Course Materials department packages the materials for each Athabasca University course, and prepares these packages for delivery by mail or pick-up. Since there are thousands of bits and pieces that go into Athabasca University course packages, you may find an occasional omission. The Course Materials department will provide you with those materials as soon as possible after you have brought this to their attention. You can contact Course Materials at (403) 675-6111.

LIBRARY

The library houses all course materials, as well as supplementary readings, records, tapes, etc. The library's reference service is also available for those wishing to research a topic. You can contact the library by telephone at (403) 675-6111. (See Appendix D for a further explanation of library services.)

COURSE CO-ORDINATORS

Course co-ordinators are responsible for the development and delivery of Athabasca University courses. Detailed questions regarding courses should be discussed with them. They can be contacted through the main Athabasca University switchboard—(403) 675-6111.

TUTORS

Your tutor will probably be your most frequent contact with Athabasca University. All Athabasca University students are assigned a tutor with whom they discuss course content and from whom they can obtain assistance on course-related matters. Many people find the prospect of one-to-one contact with a tutor somewhat intimidating. However, once this barrier is passed, tutor assistance is usually seen as a great benefit to the learning process, as well as a source of external motivation. We urge you to make maximum use of your tutor.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT YOU'RE GETTING INTO: THE RACE AND THE COMPETITION

WHO ARE ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS?

Athabasca University students are a very diverse group. Some of their characteristics have been summarized by our Institutional Studies Department (*Athabasca University Fact Book, 1981-1982*) as follows:

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The majority of Athabasca University students are female....the sex distribution from year to year has remained fairly stable, at about 60 per cent female and 40 per cent male. Most of the students are between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four, the proportionate size of this group having increased consistently from 55 per cent in 1976/77 to 70 per cent during both 1980/81 and the current fiscal year....The average age of the entire student population in 1981/82 was thirty-two years of age. With regards to these characteristics, Athabasca University students are very much like students who study part-time at conventional universities.

Almost all Athabasca University students have jobs that occupy them full-time (homemakers are included here). Students have typically listed about 100 different job titles, ranging from tradesman, to labourer, to clerk, to professional. The following table displays the largest occupational groupings reported over the past three fiscal years, and the percentage of the student body represented by each grouping.

	1979/80	80/81	81/82	82/83	83/84
Homemakers, students and the retired	23%	14%	17%	18%	21%
Clerical occupations	9%	5%	11%	13%	13%
Teachers	9%	6%	8%	9%	8%
Medicine and health related occupations	6%	7%	10%	10%	11%
Managerial positions	-		8%	9%	9%

Occupation of students: (1) Figures and occupational titles differed for years prior to the current fiscal year and have been re-aggregated according to the major *List of Occupational Codes and Titles* derived by Statistics Canada

About one-half of our students have at least one child of high school age or younger living at home, and about one-fifth have at least one pre-school child. Heavy job and domestic commitments, as well as geographical isolation, seem to be major factors in students' decisions to study at Athabasca University. Students have consistently reported that the main reason for studying with Athabasca University is flexibility of starting and completing courses at any time of the year, combined with the freedom of setting one's own study schedule. Students consider the next most important feature to be the advantage of studying in your own community. The following table presents data from the last three years on students' reasons for choosing Athabasca University

	1979/82	80/81	81/82	82/83	83/84
Time (flexible pacing, schedule)	29%	27%	26%	25%	18%
Distance (study at home)	22%	20%	19%	20%	16%
Educational (courses, open admission)	19%	17%	15%	11%	5%
Financial (maintain employment, etc)	14%	14%	13%	19%	18%
Not specified	16%	22%	27%	25%	43%

Primary reason for taking a course through Athabasca University: (1) Definitions of these categories have been changed somewhat and data have been re-aggregated for years prior to the current fiscal year.

ADULT LEARNERS

Athabasca University students can be seen as part of a growing body of adult university students. The current trend toward a "greying of the campus" is expected to continue with considerable momentum. The question of whether this new group of students implies a "greying of achievement motivation" has been put to researchers. When university faculty members were asked to describe typical full-time day students and typical part-time (adult) evening students, the following characteristics emerged:

Characteristics of Students* *Responses (in percentages)*

Characteristics	*Part-time Students*	*Full-time Students*	*% Points of Difference*
Mature	54.8	4.1	50.7
Respect for learning	50.7	24.6	26.1
Over-anxious about grades	49.6	50.7	1.1
Challenging to instructor	42.5	30.2	12.3
Responsible adult	42.1	4.1	38.0
Highly motivated	41.7	27.6	14.1
Tired	38.8	1.8	37.0
Vocationally oriented	38.0	28.7	9.3
Hardworking	35.0	25.3	9.7
Unprepared for college	24.6	11.5	13.1
Confused about goals	18.6	37.3	18.7
Well-prepared for classes	17.5	16.7	.8
Complacent	13.0	16.4	3.4
Analytical	10.4	10.8	.4
Fearful	9.7	13.8	4.1
Rigid	5.9	7.4	1.5

These survey results, together with other research on adult students, have highlighted three characteristics of adult learners.

These characteristics are:

- a heightened capacity to synthesize new learning
- a heightened capacity to maintain self-directed motivation
- a greater array of responsibilities and self-doubts which must be resolved before full concentration and study is possible

These results suggest that adult students can perform better than expected, but there is a demonstrated need for the development of basic skills which will ensure a productive return on their investment in education. This "array of responsibilities and self-doubts" must be resolved if the concentration on study is to be possible. In some instances, the elimination of a study program may be the most sensible solution to overextension. However, if your educational goals are important to you, we urge you to consider some alternative solutions. "A (shoelace) in time saves nine."

---

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PART

2

THE SHOELACES NEEDED FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SURVIVAL

Athabasca University Student Services has opted for the use of self-assessment and self-management techniques as a way of achieving the skills needed to ensure a productive return on the efforts you put into your education. In our opinion, this is an effective way to approach the problems of university survival; however, we recognize that it is not the only way. We have chosen a set of techniques described as self-directed because we are addressing the adult distance education student who is likely to be motivated and who is self-directed. Self-directed techniques are specific methods you can use to analyse your own situation, and to determine whether your behaviour and attitudes are assisting you in reaching your goals. Although these techniques are applicable to many situations (work, home, social relationships), the concern here is with their application to educational goals.

We assume that you are entering university because you want to, and that your goal is to graduate or to complete the course or courses in which you register.

Motivation is a vital ingredient for accomplishment. Essentially, motivation can be described as the strength of your desire, or the need you have to acquire and accomplish or complete a goal. If motivation is to be useful, it must be channelled toward productive action. Motivation combined with techniques for getting into action increase your control over yourself and the direction your life takes.

Although the guidebook is designed to be used independently by students, its value can be enhanced when it is used with the assistance of a Student Services counsellor who fully understands the principles on which it is based. Please do not hesitate to call us; we welcome your calls.

We have focussed specifically on issues that appear to be common concerns of adult distance education students. The issues covered here are specifically related to achieving academic and personal goals. These issues are:

- readiness for returning to student life
- time and role conflicts involved in a lifestyle change
- efficiency of study techniques
- maintenance of motivation

CHAPTER 3

SELF-ASSESSMENT: IS THIS THE TIME AND PLACE FOR ME TO RUN THIS RACE?

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;...

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The question of whether this is the time and season for you to begin or to return to a student life can have no formula answer. There are undoubtedly many intangibles involved. Your sense of purpose, your interest, your responsibilities, your time, your capabilities, and the pressures, enticements, and chance circumstances that life holds for you all combine to make the assessment of your "season to learn" in a distance university program a difficult one. We believe that an assessment of the factors involved is a critical step in making a sound decision.

ASSESSMENT: *TELLING IT LIKE IT IS*

On the audiotape, "Telling It Like It Is", which accompanies this guidebook, a personalized view of student life from the perspective of several Athabasca University students is presented. Four students currently registered at Athabasca University talk about their experiences as adult distance education students. Each presents a personal viewpoint and a different approach to being a student.

As you listen to the tape, consider your situation and your personal attributes. When you have finished listening, we have a number of exercises for you to do. We hope they will help you to maximize the efforts put into your entry or return to university.

NOW LISTEN TO THE TAPE

***NOTE:** Listening to audiotapes is often difficult for our TV-trained ears. Our eyes try to find a focus and this can be distracting. Try closing your eyes, or listen in a setting that is not visually distracting.*

Some of the characteristics these students possess and the environmental circumstances in which they function have helped them become successful distance university students. On the left-hand side of Chart #1, *The AU Student - And Me,* is a space for you to fill in characteristics and circumstances that you think have helped the students be successful. There is also space to list the hurdles you sense that they have had to surmount to get to the point they are at now.

CHART #1 *The AU Student - And Me*

AU Students - Characteristics and Circumstances Aiding Success

(e.g., They obtain personal satisfaction from completing their course work.)

Me - "Success" Characteristic and Circumstances

(e.g., I enjoy reading and learning. I think I would enjoy taking structured courses.)

AU Students - Hurdles Surmounted

(e.g., Fear of failure)

Me - Hurdles I May have to Surmount

(e.g., Fear of failure. Sending my first assignment in for marking.)

How do you compare? On the right, list characteristics and circumstances you feel will help you in being a successful student. Then, list the hurdles that you will need to overcome. In the remainder of this guidebook, we will touch on some of the hurdles common to our students.

However, we cannot anticipate all of the particular issues you may face. You may wish to discuss with a counsellor any difficulties you are having or anticipate having. Gaining the perspective of an objective person in analyzing and suggesting solutions may prove helpful.

CHAPTER 4

CLARIFYING THE CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE: AM I READY TO GO INTO TRAINING?

The decision to become a student may be a good indication of your values, goals, and motivation. Many people feel that it is one of the best decisions they have ever made. Beyond the practical benefits of obtaining a university education. the personal satisfaction may be an even greater reward than you had initially expected. However, many active and energetic adults seem to believe that they are able to take on innumerable tasks without exhausting either themselves or the people close to them.

A self-paced flexible home-study university course may appear to be easy to fit into your schedule. But, one of the major differences between being an adult student attending university and being a university student just out of high school is the number of responsibilities one carries. Being a worker, a parent, a spouse, or a community member all bring with them benefits and demands that may compete with the benefits and demands of being a student. Finding the time to be a student may take planning. Like most lifestyle changes that are thought about only in the abstract, the likelihood of finding the time and energy is reduced by not clearly defining where and how that time is to be made available.

In order to understand the impact that being a student may have on both you and the others with whom you live and work, a close look at what will change when you become a student is needed. The following exercise was designed specifically for adult students in distance education to help them anticipate and prepare for university work.

FIRST

Fill out the chart labelled *The Week That Was / The Week That Is to Be* with the activities you were involved in last week (or a more typical week, if last week was atypical).

SECOND:

Now, circle ten hours that you can envision using as study time (eight to ten hours is usually enough for reasonable progress on one course). Double that time if you expect to finish two or three courses per year. Study time should be scheduled in periods during which you are awake and can concentrate, alone and undisturbed.

CHART #2 - Self-Assessment Planning Chart:
The Week That Was/The Week That Is To Be

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7 AM							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
1 PM							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
1 AM							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

DIRECTIONS:

For each box (hour of the day) note the dominant activity of that hour, e.g. studying, sleeping, eating, work (including housework), recreation, etc.

THIRD:

Look at the circled hours on your chart. Note which people and what activities are affected. Consider combining activities such as watching TV, walking the dog, cooking, housekeeping, or gardening with "companion time" or time spent with family or friends. Doubling up on such activities can free time for study.

FOURTH:

Once you have arrived at what you consider a reasonable and realistic schedule, two questions must be answered.

1. Can I shift or give up those activities affected by study time without feeling that I'm sacrificing too much and without feeling guilty about reneging on responsibilities toward myself or others? List the pros and cons in the spaces below.

   Which side has the greater number and/or the weightier arguments?

Pro-school arguments	Con-school arguments
(e.g., I may be able to get a better job)	(e.g., I will have to give up my craft classes)

2. Secondly, how is the reduction in time spent with others likely to be reacted to by those others?

Person	Reaction
(e.g., Friend)	(e.g., Likely to be a bit put off when I'm not available for squash, coffee, etc.)

THIRD:

Look at the circled hours on your chart. Note which people and what activities are affected. Consider combining activities such as watching TV, walking the dog, cooking, housekeeping, or gardening with "companion time" or time spent with family or friends. Doubling up on such activities can free time for study.

FOURTH:

Once you have arrived at what you consider a reasonable and realistic schedule, two questions must be answered.

1. Can I shift or give up those activities affected by study time without feeling that I'm sacrificing too much and without feeling guilty about reneging on responsibilities toward myself or others? List the pros and cons in the spaces below.

   Which side has the greater number and/or the weightier arguments?

Pro-school arguments	Con-school arguments
(e.g., I may be able to get a better job)	(e.g., I will have to give up my craft classes)

2. Secondly, how is the reduction in time spent with others likely to be reacted to by those others?

Person	Reaction
(e.g., Friend)	(e.g., Likely to be a bit put off when I'm not available for squash, coffee, etc.)

This second question is one of the most critical issues for a large number of adults in distance education. The support of significant others has been repeatedly suggested as one of the most important factors in determining whether home-study students are successful in completing their courses. And, of course, support cannot be only at an intellectual level. Education, like motherhood and country, is unlikely to find critics at this level. The nitty-gritty changes in one's everyday life are where the support or lack of it really matters. Let's consider some reactions encountered by other distance education students. The following is excerpted from the student magazine at the University of New England in Australia:

EXTERNAL PRESSURES*

from parents, neighbours, children, spouse, boss, workmates:

(a) undermining: "Are you sure you've got what it takes? You know you're not very well organized." "You're not clever enough to do that."

(b) probing the guilty spots: "Have you though of what it'll do to the kids?" "Won't you be taking up a place from a young person straight from school?"

(c) denial: "You can do what you like so long as it doesn't affect me and the family in any way. I just don't want to hear about it."

(d) being difficult: "Remember I've got that business trip planned for some time this year. No, I can't say for sure when it'll be."

(e) blatant opposition: "If you start at that University, you needn't come home tonight."

(f) hoping it'll go away: "Haven't you got that study bug out of your system yet?"

(g) enough is enough: "I was prepared to pull my weight for a time, but I didn't expect it would go on for so long."

(h) poor little me: "My (ulcer, insomnia, backache, etc.) is worse today, dear."

(i) puzzled: "Why can't you be like normal women/men (or my mother/father) (your mother/father?)"

(j) everyone in their place: "When a man works hard all day, he shouldn't have to help out at home, too. As long as my wife wants to study, she'll have to do it as well as the housework and looking after the children. After all, I bring the income into this house, so her job is to look after the home."

MARRIAGE/RELATIONSHIP BREAK-UPS*

There are several reasons suggested for this type of problem.

1. Too much time studying and not enough time given to the relationship.
2. University is a change of status therefore there exists a need for partners to understand what is involved to avoid a feeling of neglect and inferiority.
3. Coping with existence at university causes a dropping of most pre-existing life roles, i.e. losing social contacts.
4. Study which brings about the enlightenment of one partner causes a rift in the relationship because of diverging knowledge and attitudes.

* "External Pressures" reprinted with permission from the editor, *External Insight*, University of New England, 1981-82, p. 16.

COPING SKILLS USEFUL FOR MAKING THE TRANSITION TO NEW LIFESTYLE

Obstacles to genuine support or tolerance for time spent studying can often be overcome or decreased if one attacks the issue with a few simple practices which are common to effective communication and negotiation skills. There are two guidelines for obtaining a deep level of support in your changed lifestyle.

1. ASK AND IT MAY BE GIVEN: *Demand and It Shall Be Denied or Given Grudgingly.*

The first principle asserts that you have a right to ask others for something you want. You could be asking for time to study, a reduction in household or parenting responsibilities, or anything that may appear necessary for you to meet your needs as a student. Others who are affected by your needs and the changes in your lifestyle must be consulted. A frank discussion with these people can be helpful, especially if it is done *before* making any changes.

Asking for co-operation is more likely to have positive results than demanding that your needs be met. You consult with the people involved, taking their needs into consideration as well as yours.

2. GIVE TO GET

When asking for more time for yourself or for the reduction or rescheduling of responsibilities, an important factor to consider is the need to give others something in return. The ability to negotiate successfully (which we do continually in our daily lives) will result in what has been called a "win-win" situation. Both sides end up satisfied with the decisions reached.

Asking for a change in your lifestyle or schedule (you are going to be available to friends or family for less hours per week than previously) is more likely to get a positive or successful response if you give others involved the opportunity to be heard and show respect for their needs. Although sometimes it is very difficult, you must (a) listen and (b) respect others' needs by being open to options that may satisfy them as well as yourself.

Listening may mean obtaining more support than you envisioned. Listening allows you to become aware of things that may aid or upset plans in the future, and this knowledge will help in righting difficulties you may encounter while changing your lifestyle.

Listening also allows you to make plans that are less likely to encounter snags. If your first choice of study time is Monday evening, but your spouse's craft class or your son's soccer game are scheduled that night, a trade-off of some sort is required. The priority of needs may be difficult to establish, but listening helps when everyone understands that their needs cannot always come first and should not always come last. Options that are reasonably satisfying to everyone can usually be worked out if honest communication and respect for rights exists in a relationship.

NOTE: Some excellent books are available on communication, assertion, and negotiation skills. Please consult the references listed in Appendix B. Student Services also provides counselling on these matters. Self-help audiotapes are also available from the Athabasca University Library and Student Services.

CHAPTER 5

EFFICIENT STUDY: DO I NEED TO IMPROVE MY RUNNING STYLE?

If you are a person who would rather study than eat, sleep, drink, make love, play—or any of the other activities that fill your life—you may as well skip this section. If this is not an accurate description of you, you may want to learn to use the study time you have as efficiently as possible, so that you still have time to eat, sleep, drink, etc.

To learn and remember as much as possible in as little time as possible involves learning techniques that help you work with the way your brain works rather than in a way that is in opposition to your brain functioning or powers of concentration. Many people complain of not being able to concentrate. The problem is not really a lack of concentration—we are always concentrating on something. The problem is gaining the ability to concentrate on what we want to concentrate on rather than allowing ourselves to concentrate on the distracting thoughts that interfere with the task at hand. To gain control over our minds often takes arduous practice. With practice, this control can become automatic.

Learning a new skill requires a great deal of conscious effort during the initial stages. But, slowly and gradually, it becomes an easy and familiar process. Learning to drive a car is a good illustration of the process involved.

A wide variety of techniques applicable to all types of study, as well as techniques useful for completing specific assignments such as writing papers or solving problems, are discussed in the *Student Handbook* and Appendix C. We present here only a few of the basic needs that students have. These include:

(a) time

(b) place

(c) study skills

Let's put these basic needs into a problem-solving formulation.

OVERALL PROBLEM

You need to study efficiently.

SPECIFIC SUB-PROBLEMS REQUIRING SOLUTIONS

(a) TIME

You need to work out a time schedule that works for you.

Having specific times when you habitually study can aid concentration. In addition, inventiveness in using odd times for reviewing material can also be effective for some students. Ann, for example (one of the students you heard on the audiotape), began taking the bus to work rather than driving because she found the bus ride was a good time to review. Colleen, who also had a long way to travel, made tape recordings of the major points in her assignments and played these tapes while driving to and from work. Another strategy students have found useful is planning some study time during their tutor hours.

Finding a schedule that works often takes a bit of trial and error. A major accomplishment during your first course is simply learning to learn—and part of that is finding the time to do it.

(b) PLACE

You need to find a place to study that is free of distractions.

This is a very important element which may have a very individualized solution. Some people are able to concentrate with activities going on around them. (These people are rare. The rest of us usually find them easy to dislike!) Others of us need a great deal of quiet and isolation. Many women, for instance, find that they have become so in tune with their children, that they have a very difficult time not attending to them even when they know another adult is in charge. Solutions may involve finding a study place away from home or creating a space in the basement or attic, away from household sounds.

(c) STUDY SKILLS

Useful suggestions for learning to learn encompass factors in your physical environment, in your social environment, and in your internal environment. Each of the students you heard on the tape presents an example of an individualized solution. If you have supportive and helpful people in your social environment, you already have a major advantage. Setting up a physical environment in which to learn may go beyond time and place, and into an analysis of the distractions that occur in that environment. Your internal environment or "mind set" needed to maintain concentration may include setting up a schedule of graduated work goals or deadlines, charting your progress, learning techniques of studying, writing papers, overcoming test anxiety, etc.

If any of these are areas where you feel you could improve, we urge you to do one of the following:

- Contact Student Services for help with study skills. We run workshops and provide individual assistance.
- Read Appendix C and our *Student Handbook*.
- Consult one or more of the references included in the *Student Handbook*.

We would also like to make sure you are aware of the library services available to you. Please note the description in Appendix D.

CHAPTER 6

SELF-MAINTENANCE OF MOTIVATION: AM I MENTALLY PREPARED TO RUN THIS RACE?

Distractions such as household sounds come from outside a person. Some planning of your environment is required to avoid them. Some planning of your interactions with the people in your environment is also required. We talked about some of these issues in Chapter 4. Many major distractions, however, come from inside a person. Humans are marvelously adept at talking themselves into or out of any behaviour that seems satisfying or dissatisfying at the moment. We can often deny the long-term implications of our behaviour or find rationalizations which maximize the benefits and minimize the negatives involved in the activity in which we are engaged.

A major internal distraction may be your own self-doubt, or negative statements you make about yourself. With such thoughts you can effectively cut off further effort and possible success. But, we have an equally strong capacity to eliminate negative thought patterns. Realizing that capability requires attending to your own internal semantic ecology. There is growing evidence (Meichenbaum, 1978) which suggests that people who are able to turn off their negative self-referent statements (e.g., "This is impossible. I'll never be able to do this.") and switch to positive self-referent statements (e.g., "This is difficult. But, if I work at it, I can do it.") are more likely to succeed whether success is focussed on physical stamina, interpersonal stress, tolerance of pain, or academic effort.

SELF-TALK

Think of how much of your day is spent on internal monologues—all the thoughts, feelings, and images that go on in your head. Many people are unaware of how much these monologues affect their behaviour. Recent studies indicate that what we say to ourselves—even when we are not consciously aware of it—may effectively sabotage our efforts, or may alternatively give us the critical boost we need to keep working toward our goal.

Getting control of this potential influence is readily available to the person involved. There are at least two steps involved:

1. ASSESSMENT: Becoming aware of one's self-talk.

2. COPING STRATEGY: Learning to change your negative (destructive) self-talk to positive (constructive) self-talk.

STEP 1 Becoming aware of one's self-talk.

Recall some of the statements made by the students on the tape when discussing their first thoughts about becoming university students. Some paraphrased examples are:

Ann:	"University is put on such a pedestal. If you don't make it, everyone will know what a disaster you are."
Scott:	"I thought, well, if I don't make this, I might as well pack it in and give up."
Ken:	"I'd thought I'd be able to sail through—but with my first course, I found that's not the case."
Colleen:	"I thought—I don't know if I can make this. I don't know if I can achieve this level."

Becoming aware of one's self-talk is the first step in learning to control it. Chart #3 below is aimed at making explicit the kind of negative self-talk you have engaged in during a real life, anxiety-producing situation. If, for example, you found your first thorough examination of your Athabasca University course materials a bit ominous, use this experience to fill in the chart, or use a situation where you have experienced anxiety about your capacity to cope.

Close your eyes and recall as vividly as possibly the sequence of thoughts, feelings, and images as they occurred during the experience. Then, list these thoughts, feelings, and experiences in the left column below:

CHART #3 *Self-Statements for Coping With Self-Doubt*

Negative self-statements, images feelings	Positive self-statement, images feelings
(e.g., "You mean they expect me to get get through all of this? I'll never be able to do it!")	(e.g., "Wait a second. If I just divide this into 12 monthly sections (or maybe 10 to give me some leeway) it will look more manageable.")

Recall the statements made by the students who have successfully combatted their initial doubts and reservations about tackling university work. Remember, each of them expressed a need to find new and different ways of combatting doubts as their own motivation and circumstances changed. Some examples of different techniques for handling self-doubt are:

Colleen:	"I'm not a quitter. If it takes me till I'm 85 I'm still going to finish...I get discouraged. But I always know help is as close as the nearest telephone."
Scott:	"Well, I just go at it and do it. I don't give myself a chance to think (negatively). When you make it, it makes you feel a lot better about yourself."
Ken:	"I have to bring myself back...Sometimes I let go and I have to bring myself back...I always set my goal within a certain time period. And my goal is to meet that goal."
Ann:	"Well—I won't quit. And I want to do well..It's my goal...and it's important for me—even if no one else knows."

Now, consider your own goals, your own reasons for wanting to be successful as a student. How could you combat the self-doubts you expressed earlier on the left column of Chart #3. Again, vividly imagine the kind of thought you could substitute and put these down on the right-hand column of Chart #3.

Become more aware of negative self-talk. Practice substituting positive and more rational talk. You will probably not eliminate occasional doubts about your competence. You can, however, make small, gradual inroads that in the long run will substantially change your approach to many of life's problematic situations. Elimination of all self-doubt should *not* be your goal. Switching off negative thoughts and substituting more positive and rational thoughts with ease and with rapidity *should* be the goal. The sooner you are back to focusing on how you can cope and on actually coping (concentration on the tasks at hand rather than on your self-doubts), the better and more effectual your progress will be.

RELAXATION: DECREASING PHYSICAL TENSION

An additional element in dealing effectively with our self-doubts and fears is frequently the physical tension that accompanies these feelings. It is important for many people to work not only with the mental and emotional sources of their concerns but also with the physical reactions that can drain energy and make concentration difficult.

Learning to relax is also a skill that can be learned. It involves becoming aware of when and how your body reacts to stress and then learning ways of relaxing those reactions. People differ in their preferences for the relaxation techniques available. We have enclosed a copy of *The Magical Child Within: Relaxation.* In it are a number of relaxation techniques you may wish to try. You should be aware that it takes about a week of daily practices before you will be fully aware of whether the technique is effective for you.

Combining relaxation with self-talk strategies is often a productive combination in overcoming fears and self-doubts. Appendix E provides further suggestions on stress-management. Self-help audiotapes covering a wide variety of relaxation methods are also available from Student Services.

FROM YOU → TO ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

Our own self-doubts about the value of this guidebook lead us to thoughts about it being a total waste of time, inappropriate, ineffectually written, etc. Our positive thoughts suggest that it may be a reasonable first try. And, our rational thinking tells us that we will need to evaluate the responses we obtain from you before we can try to estimate the relative merits (or demerits) of this approach.

We hope you will not keep us in suspense too long. Please fill out the evaluation form that follows. Your honest responses will provide the kind of concrete information we can use to plan future orientation programs.

Thank you.

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENT ORIENTATION GUIDEBOOK EVALUATION

1. To what degree do you feel you have received each of the following benefits from this Guidebook?

(a) Increased awareness that will assist you in planning more effectively for returning to school.

____to a large extent
____to some extent
____very little

(b) Specific skills, approaches and techniques that you may want to consider applying.

____to a large extent
____to some extent
____very little

(c) New information which will be useful in planning for university.

____to a large extent
____to some extent
____very little

2. What new skills and/or new ideas did you learn in this Guidebook?

3. The Guidebook would be more effective if:

4. Major strengths and weaknesses of:

   (a) Part I - the introduction to AU students and to adult students in general

   (b) the audiotape "Telling It Like It Is"

   (c) the section on the impact of changing your lifestyle

   (d) the introduction of study skills as a possible concern

   (e) the section on self-maintenance of motivation

5. The Guidebook has been:

- excellent
- good
- fair
- poor

(please circle one) in meeting my current goals.

6. Would you recommend this Guidebook to a colleague or friend who was considering returning to school at Athabasca University?

7. Comments:

Thank you

(Photo of Student Services
staff appears here.)

Good luck from the Student Services team!

From left to right, Brenda-Deane Nichols, Virginia Nilsson, Don Avirom, Eileen Smigielski, Maxim Jean-Louis, Donna Radtke, Arlene Young, David Walters, Rosalyn Delehanty, and Jane Brindley

APPENDIX

STUDENT SERVICE STAFF PROFILES

DON AVIROM - Athabasca

Don completed a B.Sc. and M.A. in the United States before moving to Canada in 1970. He has been a teacher, social worker, stage rigger, shipwright, counsellor, community development worker, and has had prolonged escapes into several other occupations.

Since Don, his wife, and two young boys, have spent many years in Alberta's Peace River country, he is particularly sensitive to the needs of our more remote students.

JANE BRINDLEY - Edmonton

Jane is originally from Southern Alberta. She completed her B.A. in psychology at the University of Alberta. She developed a keen appreciation for non-traditional methods of education while in a program which gave credit for work experience. Since then, she has been involved in various aspects of career development—employment counselling, work experience programs, career research, personnel recruitment, and career counselling.

ROSALYN DELEHANTY - Edmonton

Rosalyn has a B.A. in psychology from Minnesota and a master's degree in educational psychology from Alberta. She is currently working on a thesis for her Ph.D. in counselling psychology. Rosalyn has been counselling university students for a ten-year period, both at the University of Alberta and here at Athabasca University. Previous experience has been in assessment of learning and behavioural problems, and in the rehabilitation of handicapped adults. Counselling specialties developed over the last ten years have included assertiveness training and sexual dysfunction counselling.

Rosalyn's work foci at Athabasca University include academic, vocational, and personal counselling, as well as evaluation and research of Student Services' functions.

MAXIM JEAN-LOUIS - Athabasca

As Student Information Co-ordinator, Maxim has responsibility for Student Services' publications (*Athabasca University Magazine, Student Handbook, Awards and Financial Aid Handbook*), the administration of Athabasca University's awards and financial aid programs, and student advising.

Although his degrees are in arts and education, Maxim's areas of specialization are information, and more particularly publications. Maxim hopes to increase the size of Athabasca University's awards and financial aid programs, and plans to study the semiology of advertising (a pompous way of saying how written advertisements work).

VIRGINIA NILSSON

Virginia has degrees in psychology from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Alberta. Her interests in psychology include learning and operant behaviour. She has done teaching and research consulting in the areas of program planning and evaluation with Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, ACCESS, Athabasca University, and the Edmonton School for Autistic Children. Virginia has been a central marker and tutor with Athabasca University since 1979.

DONNA RADTKE - Athabasca

Donna helps students to assess their academic readiness for university work, to learn more about "how to study", and to sort out any learning difficulties they may run into. She received a Master of Applied Science degree in psychology from the University of Waterloo before moving to Alberta. Donna is presently Head of Student Services.

In addition to her interest in educational psychology, Donna also has done cross-cultural psychological research on Canadian Indian reserves and has lived and travelled extensively in Latin America.

SHANNON WHELAN - Athabasca

Shannon came to Athabasca University after working with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission as a counsellor and consultant. She has also worked as a social worker with Social Services and Community Health where she worked with parents of abused children, abused children, unwed mothers, and wards of the court.

Shannon's counselling experiences have led her to feel a particular affinity for issues that relate to women. She most enjoys her counselling contacts with women, particularly when these involve career and educational planning.

Shannon is nearing completion of her B.S.W. and, consequently, has great empathy with the many Athabasca University students trying to juggle family responsibilities, studying, and working.

ARLENE YOUNG - Edmonton

Arlene has been with Athabasca University since 1975, and has the greatest seniority among the Student Services staff. Her awareness of Athabasca University's internal structure is great—and probably accounts for her development of our Student Complaint System and for her strong student advocacy. Her counselling focus includes a full range of academic, vocational, and personal counselling. Women's issues and political activities are two strong areas of interest.

APPENDIX B

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS LIST

The materials listed below are available on loan from the Athabasca University Library.

BOOKS:

Alberti, Robert E., and Michael L. Emmons. Stand Up, Speak Out, Talk Back! New York: Pocket Books, 1975.

Bloom, Lynn Z., Karen Coburn, and Joan Pearlman. *The New Assertive Woman.* New York: Dell, 1976.

Fensterheim, Herbert, and Jean Baer. *Don't Say Yes When You Want to Say No.* New York: Dell, 1975.

Fisher, Roger, and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

Gordon, Thomas, *Leader Effectiveness Training: L. E. T.* New York: Wyden Books, 1977.

SELF-HELP AUDIO TAPES

Cannistraci, Andrew J. *Auto-Induction Procedures for Relaxation.* [Audio cassette.] New York: BioMonitoring Applications, 1975.

Fishman, Steven T. *Sensory Awareness Relaxation.* [Audio cassette.] New York: BMA Audio Cassettes, 1980.

Procter, Judith. *Relaxation Procedures.* [Audio cassette.] New York: BMA Audio Cassettes, 1978.

Other self-help tapes on such problems as overcoming insomnia, self-regulation of body weight and shyness are available through Student Services. Please consult a counsellor for assistance in determining the suitability of these tapes for you.

APPENDIX C

TECHNIQUES OF STUDY*

THE TIME AND PLACE FOR STUDY

WHEN TO STUDY

If you are studying for one full-credit course you must have decided already that you can spare at least ten hours a week for study (at least twenty hours if you are taking two courses at once). Here are some suggestions for using those hours well:

1. Each time you receive a package of course material, plan out the study sessions you think you will need to deal with it.
2. Every weekend make out a study timetable showing where you plan to fit in each of your study sessions for the week ahead, taking account of the times of broadcasts.
3. Try to do some study nearly every day—get into the habit of using odd half-hours as well as longer spells. (You can do a lot of background reading, or preliminary scanning, on a train journey or in a lunch break.)
4. Tackle your toughest work at times when you are at your best - whether this is first thing in the morning, later in the day, or even in the middle of the night.
5. Leave enough free time for recreation (including sleep) and leisure activities. It is important not to let your studies grind you down - or you and the studies suffer.
6. Make a note of what you hope to achieve in each study session - either in terms of completing some task like an assignment or a section in a correspondence text, or in terms of reaching the objectives specified at the beginning of a course unit by its author.
7. Begin work at the very start of each study session, e.g.
   - (a) First review what you did in your last session on the topic.
   - (b) Force yourself to keep concentrating, but
   - (c) Take a total of five to ten minutes definite break within each hour of study - especially when you are studying for several hours at a stretch. A drink or a quick walk can renew your energy for a further period of study.
   - (d) End up by reviewing what you have achieved. Did you finish the task? Did you reach the author's objective? If not, what do you plan to do about it?

WHERE TO STUDY

You possibly won't have a wide choice of places to study, e.g. home, public library, study centre but:

1. Try to find a place as free from distraction as possible - away from television, radio, telephones, record players, etc.

* The section "Techniques of Study" has been reproduced with permission from the Open University.

2. Wherever you find to study, try to study always in the same place. Not only does this mean there will be fewer new things to distract you from your work but also, as you build up the habit of sitting in that place to work, you'll find you can switch into a learning mood the moment you sit down. (But don't let this 'place-habit' get so strong that you are incapable of studying in other places!)

3. The only equipment you need, apart from books and correspondence materials, is a table, a chair and a good light. Many people find it best to sit up at a table, as they find it difficult to concentrate when sitting back in an armchair.

4. Try to keep your study place warm but not too hot, and let plenty of fresh air in.

5. Let it be known that during study sessions you can't be interrupted. Clearly you will need the good-will and co-operation of your family in this, but do let your study hours be clear to your friends so that they too will respect your work.

HOW TO READ BETTER

One very useful approach to studying a correspondence text, or a book, or an article, is known as SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review). There are five steps in this approach:

1. SURVEY the material first to get a general view of what you will then study in detail. (Scan the table of contents, the introduction, headings, emphasized sections, summaries, exercises, and final paragraphs).

2. Think up QUESTIONS that will give purpose to your study and allow you to read with anticipation (e.g. 'Why does the author divide up his material in this way?').

3. READ the material (preferably two or three times quite fast rather than once slowly).

4. Stop after each section of material to RECALL what you have read (and make notes of the main ideas and important details).

5. REVIEW what you have read (and test the accuracy of your notes) by running quickly through the four previous steps again.

DURING THE READ STAGE OF SQ3R

1. Look for the author's framework of ideas, the plan upon which he constructed the material. (This is often revealed by the headings he uses, showing you which ideas belong with which, or he may have indicated this in some kind of flow diagram.)

2. Pick out the main idea in each paragraph - often contained in the first or last sentence.

3. Look for important details, e.g. proofs, examples, support for main idea.

4. Don't ignore the author's diagrams and illustrations - they may make things clear where the text does not.

5. Think up your own examples - look for applications in your own experience.

6. Be sceptical. Don't take the author's word on trust. Look for him to justify every statement he makes. (If he doesn't, and the point is an important one, check with another book or fellow student).

7. Work out what the results would be if theories alternative to the ones you are reading about were true.

8. Don't be afraid to skip paragraphs and whole sections if you can see that they are not relevant to your purpose. (There's no law that says you've got to read every page of a book).

9. If, after chewing it over for some time, you still find a section difficult to understand, take a break, try to discuss the difficulty with other students or a tutor, or find another author's treatment of the topic, and then come back and read it again - two or three times if necessary.

HOW TO MAKE USEFUL NOTES

1. It helps to make notes because they:
   - (a) Keep you active—and concentrating (so you learn and remember better).
   - (b) Provide a written record for revision.

2. Store your notes in a loose-leaf binder. This gives you maximum flexibility to rewrite sections of your notes and rearrange them in more useful groupings as your understanding of a subject develops. Always file notes together by topic, rather than in the order in which they happened to be written.

3. Some suggestions for writing the notes:
   - (a) Contents should include:
     - (i) author's/speaker's main ideas and any important detail;
     - (ii) the logical structure of his argument (in a diagram where possible);
     - (iii) any important references he mentions;
     - (iv) space for adding relevant examples or quotations you may come across later.
   - (b) Make notes at the Recall stage of SQ3R.
   - (c) Use your own wording - don't just copy down undigested chunks of textbook or speech.
   - (d) Notes should not be too lengthy—full grammatical sentences are not necessary (or you might as well reread the original). For example, you might need only two or three sides of...paper to summarize a...text of thirty to sixty pages....
   - (e) Use a skeleton outline form (like these notes) rather than continuous, paragraphed prose.
   - (f) As for the mechanics of notemaking:
     - (i) record the source of your notes (e.g. a book, a text) and the date on which you wrote them;
     - (ii) use loose-leaf paper...
     - (iii) write clearly or type;
     - (iv) use logical and memorable layout on the page, e.g. new page, for each set of notes—label clearly; leave plenty of space and wide margins; use colour, diagrams, capitals, underlining, etc. for emphasis;
     - (v) use lettering, numbering and indentations...for sections and subsections;
     - (vi) work out a set of useful abbreviations for words common in your subjects—any kind of personal shorthand;
     - (vii) make use of such standard abbreviations as these:

e.g.	for example
i.e.	that is
cf.	compare, remember in this context
NB	note well, important
=	equals, is the same as
≠	does not equal. is different from
<	less than
>	greater than
∴	therefore
∵	because

If you are at all worried about the usefulness of the notes you are making, your tutor-counsellor or course tutor may be able to help you. Also, if possible, compare your notes with those made by other students.

HOW TO READ FASTER

Most students spend a great deal of time working on books and other printed materials. They would be able to use this time more effectively if they could read faster. And the truth is that most people could read at least half as fast again, and still understand just as well. Slow readers tend to read one word at a time, often mouthing the words as they do so, and to take frequent glances back at words they have seen already. Some read so slowly that by the time they have got to the end of a paragraph, or even a sentence, they may have forgotten how it began. Here are five ways you can start helping yourself to read faster:

1. Have your eyes tested—many people turn out to need reading glasses for continuous study.

2. Make sure you don't mouth words or say them aloud as you read.

3. Try to read in 'thought-units' (two or three words at a time) so that your eye stops only three or four times in a line of print instead of at every word.

4. Build up your vocabulary by:
   (a) Reading widely.
   (b) Using a dictionary whenever new words crop up in your reading, noting new words.
   (c) Making glossaries of words commonly used in your subjects.

5. Practice reading faster (force yourself):
   (a) Time your reading of magazine articles of known length - and test your recall of the contents.
   (b) Read all your study materials faster, even if you have to read them more than once.

The aim is to be able to vary your reading speed according to the complexity of the material and the purpose for which you are reading it. If you are simply trying to get the overall gist of a piece of narrative-type writing you should be able to read two or three times as fast as when you are trying to unravel the detailed development of a complex argument. But even when the material is very difficult you may benefit from scanning it through quickly first before you get down to reading it more intensively. Don't expect every piece of text you look at to yield up its full meaning the first time you read it. You may have to go through it several times. But several rapid readings will probably give you greater understanding, and take less time, than a single, painstaking perusal trying to assimilate all the points made.

HOW TO LEARN FROM TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTS

The television and radio programmes are important elements of your course. They do not simply repeat work you have done already in the [course] material. Instead they tackle a problem from a different angle, using techniques and resources that are not available in print. Through television and radio you can 'experience' a laboratory experiment, or a scene from Hamlet, or a civil rights demonstration, with an immediacy that is impossible in print.

How can you make sure of getting the best out of television and radio presentations? In general, try as far as you can to apply the SQ3R technique...with 'listen' or 'watch and listen' replacing the 'read' step. Specifically:

1. Check the subject of the broadcast beforehand and try to do some preliminary reading and thinking about it. (Take special note of all references to it that appear in the week's correspondence materials—you may find it introduced or outlined in a special supplement). You'll benefit most from a broadcast (as you would from a lecture) if you already know something, however little, about the subject matter, and if you have questions in mind that you would like answered.

2. Pay close attention to what is said (or shown)—especially the presenter's opening and closing words. Look out for 'signpost' words and phrases like 'therefore', 'on the other hand', 'firstly', 'secondly', etc. Try to distinguish between fact and opinion and to identify the source of all opinions stated. Make a mental note of points that are not proved or are unclear. You may be able to check them in your reading or by discussion at your study centre or summer school.

3. Try to pick out the main line of argument in the programme: what are the main ideas? What is the presenter getting at? (Don't pay such attention to details that you lose the overall thread).

4. Make a few key notes—just enough so that after the broadcast you can recall the main line of argument together with any supporting detail. Remember that while you are actually writing a note you can't be giving your full attention to what is being said, or to what is being shown on the television screen.

5. Immediately after the broadcast, with your notes in front of you, try to reconstruct the programme in your memory. It may help you to try giving an account of the broadcast to a friend or a member

of your family. The longer you leave this first attempt to recall, the less likely you are to do it successfully. Make corrections or additions to your notes where necessary.

6. If you are not happy about your memory or understanding of the broadcast, try to catch the repeat presentation or discuss it with other students if possible. Many a broadcast will be worth watching or hearing again even when you did understand it the first time. Ask for or arrange a study centre viewing or listening session with other students.

7. Needless to say, none of the above will yield worthwhile results unless your radio and television sets are in good condition and properly adjusted. You must be able to hear, or hear and see, clearly and without strain. If you are getting poor reception on your home equipment, seek expert advice: if the equipment at your study centre is not functioning properly, tell the person in charge.

HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS

The writing of an essay or critical report should always be taken seriously. After you've read, heard and talked about a topic you may be full of ideas and impressions, but you will never make this experience your own unless you try to write it down. Only then are you able to make your ideas precise, to weigh them up, to select and reject, and to organize them into a coherent pattern of your own. Essay writing thus gives you vital practice in 'sorting it out' as well as 'taking it in'. Here are a few guiding principles.

1. Be sure you know the precise subject and the kind of treatment that is called for. (Beware of being irrelevant.) Note any restrictions stated in the course material as to length, e.g. 500 words or 1,500 words.

2. Investigate all probable sources of information: books, articles, correspondence materials, radio and television notes, etc.

3. Select the most useful and relevant of the information available.

4. Write a logical outline for your essay, e.g.
   (a) Introduction—comment on subject and the treatment you propose.
   (b) Main body—argument in three or four main ideas.
   (c) Conclusion—summary and final comment.

5. Some students find it helpful to write a preliminary draft of the final paragraph at this point—so as to give the essay a clear target.

6. Write the first draft of your essay:
   (a) Write simply and directly, remembering that someone else has to understand what you are trying to say.
   (b) Use illustrations (graphs, diagrams, etc.) if they will save words.
   (c) Take care to acknowledge ideas borrowed from other authors.
   (d) List the sources you have referred to for information.

7. Rewrite the essay (if possible, after a gap of a few days) to eliminate weakness of content or treatment. Check the wording of the assignment topic again to see that you have taken the full sense and have written to the point.

8. Use the same size loose-leaf paper as for notes...so that essays and notes can be filed together for revision.

9. Leave plenty of space for teaching comments, e.g. 5 cm margin and perhaps slightly more at the bottom of each page.... It is often extremely useful to write an immediate thought or suggestion alongside or underneath a particular paragraph of a student's essay so that the end product is as written dialogue of student statements and tutor response. This is almost always preferable to the bald summary at the end of an assignment.

Lay in a stock of carbon paper and get into the habit of never parting with a piece of work unless you have a copy.

Generally, the writing of assignments gives you the chance to develop your powers to structure an argument, construct a coherent account, analyse evidence and to give pointed examples to someone who knows about the subject area you are writing on. The primary teaching function is to advise you on how to improve your written work. It is best to take this as an interchange of ideas in writing and allow yourself to write freely and openly. In this way your confidence and understanding grows and grading becomes an incidental record of your general progress.

HOW TO DEAL WITH EXAMINATIONS

[At Athabasca University], continuous assessment should relieve you of much of the stress that is often brought on by examinations. Nevertheless, an examination does form an important part of your assessment and there is no reason why you should not do well in it if you have conscientiously followed the course. Examination success depends partly on technique in the examination room but more on thorough preparation in the months leading up to the examination.

FOR EFFECTIVE PREPARATION

1. Study systematically from the time you begin your course.

2. (a) Begin [review] at the end of the first week. Every time you attempt to recall what you have learned you will be making future learning easier.
   - (b) Space out your review so that you do a little each week.
   - (c) Review in such a way that you put the emphasis on recalling ideas (rather than merely recognizing them in your books).
   - (d) Criticize and rewrite your old notes, looking for all possible memory links between subjects and topics.
   - (e) If, among your previous assignments, there are questions you didn't tackle at the time, write outline answers for them now.
   - (f) If practicable (perhaps through your study centre) get together with, say, three or four other students taking your course and form a [study group]. Then you'll be able to do some of your [review] through discussion and comment on one another's work.

3. Check through previous examination papers, if available, and (preferably in co-operation with other students) think up some possible examination questions of your own, and then:
   - (a) Write outline plans for answers.
   - (b) Write complete 'model' answers.
   - (c) Give yourself 'mock' exams, under realistic conditions, setting a time limit and allowing yourself no books or notes.
   - (d) Discuss some of your answers with other students or your tutor...

4. On the day before an examination:
   - (a) Do not try to learn new things.
   - (b) [Review] normally or relax completely.
   - (c) Gather examination equipment.
   - (d) Go to bed early.

TECHNIQUE IN THE EXAMINATION ROOM

1. Take time to read right through the examination paper and decide exactly what you have to do and which questions you prefer. Above all, make sure you know what the questions are really asking for—don't try to distort them into the questions you wish had been asked. If part of the examination consists of an objective test, make sure you understand how you are to record your responses to the questions.

2. Budget your time by allowing so much per question and ten minutes at the end for checking.

3. Plan your answers by jotting down the main ideas and important details in outline form. (Many students prefer to outline all their answers before writing any up). If you are short of time, these notes by themselves will earn you some marks.

4. Keep a sense of priorities—answer your 'best' question first. stick to your time budget, and concentrate on the main issues.

5. Write simply, directly, and to the point; watch your grammar and spelling; write legibly.

6. If, as your write, an idea crops up that you can use in a later answer, make a note of it somewhere.

7. When you have finished writing, check through all your answers to make necessary corrections....

FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT STUDYING

Naturally we don't expect you to have read, learned, and inwardly digested everything just from one inspection of these brief notes on study technique. However, we hope they have encouraged you to start examining your own study technique and asking yourself how you can make it more effective. Please don't forget about the existence of these notes. We hope that you will return to them occasionally during your course: you should find they become increasingly helpful as you get further into your studies.

In this section it has been possible merely to mention some techniques of effective study. These techniques are developed in greater detail, [in the references listed in the Student Handbook.]

APPENDIX D

USING LIBRARIES

For some of the courses at Athabasca University, materials in the course package will take up all your available time. For others, especially those at more advanced levels, you will want to supplement your course package material with the resources of a library.

A library can be of considerable benefit to you as an Athabasca University student. Any skills you gain in using a library's resources during this time will be of value to you at a later date. Libraries attempt to provide a link with the world's body of knowledge.

There are several approaches you may take to learn how to use a library effectively. Some libraries have a printed guide outlining what materials and services are available and how to go about using them. Read through the guide and ask the librarian to clarify anything that is not clear to you. If a printed guide is not available, ask the librarian to explain library services to you.

It takes considerable time and experience to learn how to use a library skilfully. Please remember to ask for help if you are having difficulty locating any material.

THE ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The library at Athabasca University provides three services of interest to students: circulation, interlibrary loan, and reference or information services. The library has copies of almost all items on the supplementary reading lists and supplementary materials lists included in many course packages, and these are available for student use. While the library prefers you to limit your requests to these items, the library will try to locate other items either from its own collection or by borrowing from another library. As well, if you are unsure of what you want, the library will try to locate material for you in the subject area described.

Students may contact the library by writing to Athabasca University Library, Box 10,000, Athabasca, Alberta, T0G 2R0. *Requests for Materials/Services* forms are included in each course package. Students may also phone the university collect (403-675-6111) and ask for the library. Those students in the Athabasca area are invited to drop in to the library in person.

OTHER LIBRARIES

The university has negotiated borrowing privileges for students in the Calgary area at The University of Calgary Library. It is intended that students should use the Athabasca University Library and the Calgary Public Library before using The University of Calgary Library. Contact Athabasca University's Calgary office for more information.

If you live in a city or large town you may wish to save time by using the facilities of your local public library first. Or, perhaps you have a community college library nearby with an open-door policy and wish to use their collection.

Some students have asked about the Extension Library. This is an institution that gives province-wide public library service to people in communities that do not have regular public library service. For more information and application forms, contact the Athabasca University Library. If you decide to make use of the local resources first, remember that the Athabasca University Library has a mandate to serve its students.

When you need information, don't be content to do without—contact either a local library or the Athabasca University Library; someone will help you out.

Athabasca University Library

APPENDIX

STRESS-MANAGEMENT SKILLS: SELF-MODIFICATION FOR PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT TO STRESS*

By L. Phillip K. Le Gras

STRESS, STRESSORS, AND STRESS REACTIONS

Stress can be understood best as a state of imbalance between demands made on us from outside sources and our capabilities to meet those demands when the expected consequences from meeting or not meeting the demands are significantly different. Stress describes a hypothetical state caused by events, called "stressors," that result in behavioral outcomes, called "stress reactions." A stressor can be any physical event, other people's behavior, social situations, our own behavior, feelings, thoughts, or anything that results in heightened physiological awareness. Pain, anger, fear, depression, and ecstasy are examples of stress reactions.

All people do not react to stressors in the same way, nor do individuals always react the same way to a particular stressor. Some people handle stress better than others; in fact, some people suffer from overstress while others are stress seekers. Individual differences in our reactions to stress are not as important as learning how to manage the stress we do feel. Through learning certain stress-management skills, we can develop self-control when stressful events occur.

The way we feel and behave under stress is determined by what we think (self-statements of private speech) in a given situation. The stress reaction involves two major elements: (1) heightened physical arousal, e.g. increased heart rate, sweaty palms, rapid breathing, or muscular tension, and (2) anxious thoughts, e.g. a sense of helplessness, panic at being overwhelmed, or a desire to run away. Because behavior and emotions are controlled by inner thoughts, the best way to exert control over them is by acquiring skills that change these thoughts.

CONTROLLING PHYSICAL AROUSAL

One method is as follows: Sit in a comfortable position in a quiet place with no distractions: close your eyes and pay no attention to the outside world, concentrate on your breathing, slowly inhaling and exhaling; softly say "relax" when each breath has been exhaled completely. This should be a gentle, passive process - a relaxing experience. Eventually the word "relax" will be associated with a sense of physical calm and just saying it in a stressful situation will induce a sense of peace.

Another simple, effective way to induce relaxation is through tension release. The general idea is to first tense a set of muscles and then to relax them so that they will be more relaxed than they were before they were tensed. Each muscle group is practiced separately, but the ultimate goal is to relax all groups simultaneously to achieve total body relaxation. For each muscle group, in turn, tense the muscles, hold them for five seconds, then relax them. Repeat the tension-release sequence three times for each group of muscles. Next, tense all the muscles together for five seconds, then release them, take a slow deep breath, and say "relax" softly to yourself as you breathe out. This sequence is also repeated three times. To incorporate this technique into everyday life, notice your bodily tension, identify the tense muscle groups, and then relax them while saying "relax" inwardly.

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* Reprinted from J. E. Jones and J. W. Pfeiffer (Eds.), *The 1981 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. San Diego, Ca.: University Associates, 1981. Used with permission.

Total relaxation can also be obtained through exercise, either aerobic or Yoga type. The relaxation experience can be extended into daily life through personal fitness programs in conjunction with inner messages to "relax." With practice we have the capability to call up the relaxation response whenever it is needed.

CONTROL OF THOUGHTS

Flexibility in thinking about situations is necessary to manage stress effectively. We must take alternative views and keep from attaching exaggerated importance to events. By taking a problem-solving approach, we can learn not to take things personally. Adverse events should not be seen as personal affronts or as threats to our egos. By taking a task orientation, we can focus on desired outcomes and implement a behavioral strategy that results in those outcomes.

A very effective mental intervention for stress management consists of talking to ourselves to guide thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in order to cope. The control of stress through self-instruction is accomplished by considering a stress experience as a series of phases. The phases and some examples of coping statements are as follows:

1. PREPARING FOR A STRESSOR. What do I have to do? I can develop a plan to handle it. I have to think about this and not panic. Don't be negative. Think logically. Be rational. Don't worry. Maybe the tension I'm feeling is just eagerness to confront the situation.

2. CONFRONTING AND HANDLING A STRESSOR. I can do it. Stay relevant. I can psyche myself up to handle this. I can meet the challenge. This tension is a cue to use my stress-management skills. Relax, I'm in control. Take a slow breath.

3. COPING WITH THE FEELING OF BEING OVERWHELMED. I must concentrate on what I have to do right now. I can't eliminate my fear completely, but I can try to keep it under control. When the fear is overwhelming, I'll just pause for a minute.

4. REINFORCING SELF-STATEMENTS. Well done. I did it! It worked. I wasn't successful this time but I'm getting better. It almost worked. Next time I can do it. When I control my thoughts I control my fear.

We must become aware of and monitor anxiety that causes self-defeating statements in stressful situations, e.g., "I'm going to fail" or "I can't do this." We must listen to what we say to ourselves with a "third ear." The occurrence of such thoughts is a cue to substitute coping self-statements. We can cope with many stressors by employing relaxation methods and coping self-statements, but at critical moments when the stress reaction is exceptionally intense and seemingly beyond our ability to cope, we can extend self-control by applying whichever of the following techniques is compatible with our needs in the particular situation:

1. DISTRACTION. Focus on something outside the stressful experience (e.g., mental arithmetic, sexual fantasy);

2. SOMATIZATION. Focus on body processes and sensations (e.g., closely observed and analyze physiological responses at the time);

3. IMAGE MANIPULATION. Manipulate stress experiences by creating complex, detailed images that reinterpret, ignore, or change the context of the experience (e.g., putting the experience of pain into a fantasy of being tortured by a sadistic Third World spy).

SUMMARY

Several useful skills have been presented for use in managing stress. Each of us should consider stressful situations he or she has experienced in the past and will face in the future, then practice stress-management skills to cope with these stressors in the future. The more we practice the skills, the greater our ability to effectively adjust to stress will be. Deep breathing, the tension-release technique, aerobic activities, and Yoga-type exercises permit us to relax physically simply by saying softly "relax." Using a problem-solving approach and using thought control to develop a repertoire of coping self-statements incompatible with self-defeating thoughts will help us to cope with stress.

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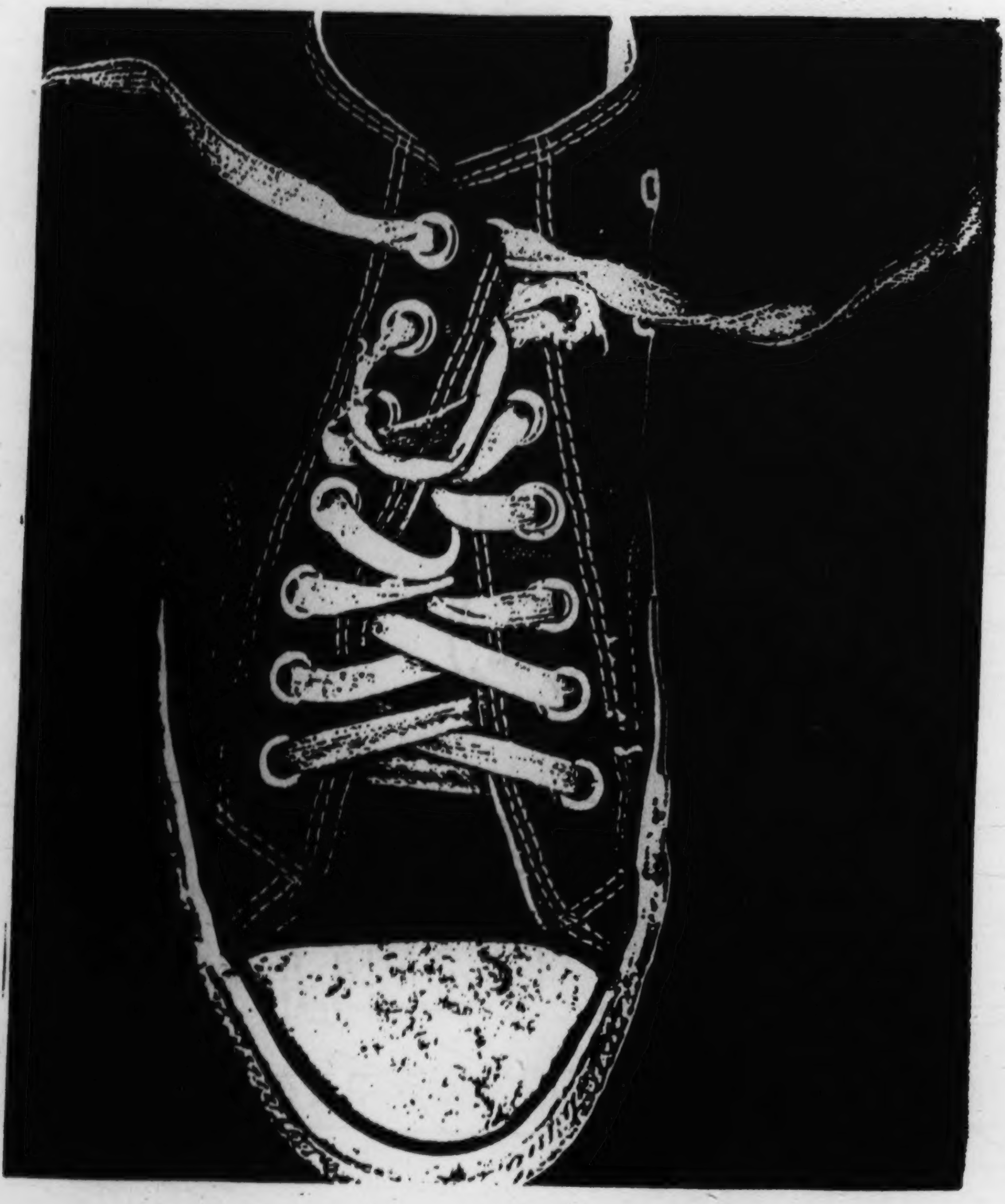

Appendix F

Transcript of Video and Audio *Telling It Like It Is*

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

Transcript of video and audiotape

Music

Title: Telling It Like It Is

Collage of photos (video) of students in various home locations and of several Athabasca University site scenes

Voice Overlay of different voices making following comments:

Voice 1: *Athabasca, is that a real university?*

Voice 2: *Sounded like a practical idea to me. It's something that should have been available a long time ago.*

Voice 3: *Well, it seemed like an experiment. I couldn't believe a real university would be open to anyone. I guess it all seemed a bit loose.*

Voice 4: *I thought it was a university custom made for me. With my schedule there is no way I could possibly attend classes on campus.*

Voice 5: *It's great. I can pick up that math course I failed and still work in the oil patch this summer.*

(Camera focuses on narrator)

Narrator: *Taking a university program by studying at home is well-established as a way of getting a university degree in places like Britain and Australia, but it's a new idea to North Americans; an idea that most of us haven't thought very much about. Without some introduction to this kind of education, it's difficult to know how it might suit you. So, to help fill you in on what you might expect, we've gathered together some experienced Athabasca University students to tell you what it has been like for them. First, let's go back to what these students thought of Athabasca University when they first started.*

Interviewer: *When you remember back to the time when you were first beginning and think about what you expected when you became an Athabasca University student, can you tell me why did you choose Athabasca University? Were there some particular features that attracted you?*

Ann: *At the beginning, I was living in the country, about 50 miles north of the city and we were living on a farm there and I had small children and I really have always enjoyed reading and learning about different places and cultures - particularly anthropology type of things. When I was out there, I couldn't go anywhere in the evening. It was very difficult to get to concerts or get to museums or any of this sort of thing. It was such a hassle. So this was my entertainment - Dimensions in Culture, which was the first course I took. It was my private time. That was what I did when all the other things were finished and the kids were in bed, this was what I did was study anthropology. Some people thought that was rather amusing, but anyway I enjoyed it.*

Ken *Prior to selecting Athabasca University, I had checked out a few other options in terms of the*

University of Alberta, as well as evening courses through NAIT and in looking at those options, I realized that I would have to spend time away from home and the family and apply myself to a specific date or two days a week in order to take courses. In looking at the Athabasca route, I realized that I could take the courses on my own, at my own time and work at home, still being with the family. Reviewing the program available through Athabasca, I realized that I could take the courses that I wanted through Athabasca University that would provide me with what I wanted in terms of work-related, career-related and future growth in terms of post-secondary education.

Scott: *My choice of Athabasca was that it was open to me. At that particular time, I didn't have my grade 12. I thought that entrance to a conventional university might be a bit more difficult plus it allowed me more flexibility in my scheduling of my time for studying purposes. My expectations were that to hopefully get a degree within three to four years.*

Colleen: *Athabasca University gave me an opportunity to continue my education, stay at home and continue working all at the same time. It also was the only program that I had found that gave me an opportunity to obtain a degree by correspondence. When I first started, I thought, well, it's a lot easier to go full-time to university and get your degree. But I think that this is a better way for me and my family. I've been able to keep up my responsibilities at home, I still have a job that I enjoy very much, I play baseball and I'm still getting a degree. I think that's pretty fantastic.*

Interviewer: *Did you have an reservations about returning to school? Any anxieties?*

Ann: *I think I did. I think everyone does. You have certain ideas about school and particularly university. It tends to be put on a pedestal and it tends to, we get this impression that only certain people can go to university and only certain people can do well and if you're the sort of person that likes to do well at what they do this can be rather an off-putting situation. But I think that once you get into it - and I think this is why Athabasca is so good because you are able to test the waters a little bit. You're doing it in such a way that you're doing it by yourself and if it doesn't work out there is no big deal. Thirty other people in the class aren't going to realize what a disaster you are - you know, your neighbors and all this sort of thing. You can just try it and then you get a little bit of confidence and you get reassurance from your tutors and you realize that a lot of your life experiences are very relevant to what you are learning and I think this is the biggest thing I discovered, that having lived a certain amount of time and done different jobs and traveled that I was able to get a lot more out of the courses that I would have done had I done them at 18 or 19.*

Ken *From the start, yes. In looking at the home study program I figured well, I could apply a fair amount of time to this and I could whip through this program in no time. However, right in the first course you realize that that does not happen.*

Colleen: *I wanted to start in an area that I felt I was familiar with and I started with accounting courses. When I first got the books, I was terrified. I thought " university learning - I don't know if I can do this, I don't know if I can complete it". Once I started the course and talked to the tutor and worked my way through it and actually got a good mark in it, well that was it! I was off and running. I was really concerned that I would fail and I suppose that that is a big concern for a student going back to school - particularly an adult student going back - is that you're taking these courses and while it's great to try as hard as you can and work as hard as you can, there is always a possibility that you may not be able to achieve the required level to get the marks that you feel you need to go through the program.*

Scott: *I was concerned about my performance. I thought that this was the trial. I though that if I botched this one, then I could pack my books and would be going home. Fortunately, it turned out fairly* *well. It just turned out good.*

I was worried whether I could start the old brain thinking again, but it got into gear fairly well. I was surprised how fast you can pick things up again, especially when you want to pick things up, that makes quite a bit of difference. When you get out into the job field, you tend to get into a bit of a rut and use only certain facilities. Going back to school sort of sharpens everything back up again and gives you, makes you feel a hell of a lot better.

Interviewer: *Distance university contains two elements that are, I think quite different from a traditional university. One, you pace the courses yourself and two, you have a tutor who you speak to individually. How do those appeal to you and how have you found them?*

Scott: *The pacing is excellent. You can get more done when you want it. I think you learn perhaps in a better manner because you are your own teacher. You have to understand it in order to go on to the next step. It's not like the whole class is going to be passing you by. The tutors are very helpful. As a general rule, I think you'll find that you don't really use the tutors that much, because how often does a problem come up on one of the tutor nights. So it's a matter of you mostly figure things out for yourself and th course content is such that it is quite easy to figure things out. It's just a matter of going back and reviewing it until it finally clicks and then on you go again. It's not a matter of having to wait for the slowest student or by chance, yourself being caught in that position and then never being able to catch back up. You don't continue until you're fully acquainted with the subject and understand it fully.*

Ann: *I'd say it is probably an easy aspect in some ways. You know the material is there, whenever you want to look at it you can. You don't have this thing where I have to go to class tomorrow and he's going to ask me questions on chapters 6, 7, and 8. So you don't have this sort of panic set in. You write your exam by yourself very often, where you just go down at night to the Vocational Centre. It doesn't have that same impact as when you walk into a room with 50 people and they're all nervous and it sort of has a cummulative effect. You just feel like running, sometimes. That I found a really good side of it. The other thing is I think the variable of the teacher is removed. If you have a good teacher, it's great, with a live class. But if you have a mediocre teacher, it can be miserable. If you remove that variable, which you do essentially with distance learning, you do have the tutor, but it is up to you how much you contact the tutor. You have more sort of control over what, the way the course is done.*

Colleen: *One credit a month - that particular schedule has worked out very well for me and it also leaves time for those little emergencies where you just might not make a credit a month, you're sill leaving time in the course program. I don't have to go through a renewal or extension type situation with the University. I still allow myself enough time for those kinds of little family problems or whatever that come up.*

Ken: *I've developed a system that does work for me and I think every individual is different and they will all develop their own system and that is the uniqueness of Athabasca University. No one is telling me that I have to work one hour a day or two hours a day, so many hours per week. I work on my own, my objective is to complete the course by that deadline. Whenever I take a course, register in a course and after reviewing the material, I usually would discuss it with the family, especially with my wife and looking at the time frame that I had and how I would deal with the course while still meeting family commitments. I would also look at my calendar, my job calendar to see what events I had planned that may interfere with my course and try and work it in accordingly. Self-determination, self-motivation is also very important in completing a home-study program and a fair amount of determination is required because, and I am the same way, I go in spurts, and I will* *go "gung ho" for a couple of weeks and then I just die off. And then you look at the calendar and say, "my God, I've got to get cracking". so, self-determination and motivation is required when you're looking at courses through Athabasca.*

Colleen: *I didn't know what to say to the tutor the first time I phoned him. I remember the first time I phoned him - it was a tutor from Devon - and I'm sure that we spent the first half-hour on the phone going mm-hmm. but after that, we got into the course and we actually started talking about the course and his experience in that particular area and helping me with my problems. It was just like talking to a friend over the telephone. Now, even if I don't have a problem in the areas that I'm studying, I find that if I contact my tutor every week, that it keeps my interest level up in the course. It's someone else that becomes involved in my learning, that keeps me going. So I enjoy the tutor contact. I think it's one of the main reasons that I've stayed with the Athabasca program and got so far as I have.*

Ken: *I felt very comfortable having a personalized tutor that I could deal with from the beginning of the course to the end of the course. From the start I was very reluctant to use them, to show my ignorance in the course, but after a while, once I started talking with them and we became familiar on a first name basis, it became very easy after that.*

Ann: *Tutors have helped a lot. I think they're very reassuring and I find that a real plus - it's much more personal. In the traditional university occasionally you will find a professor who is willing to put the time in and offer these explanations, but often the class is very big, they often don't know you personally. They don't know that much about you; they don't get a chance because of the way it's set up. I think that this way you feel the tutor is a friend and they're trying to help you along and not just create obstacles for you.*

Interviewer: *Were you concerned about studying and maintaining family and job responsibilities at the same time?*

Colleen: *In that regard, I feel I've been really, really fortunate. Before I started with Athabasca University, Wayne and Kurt and I sat down. We decided firstly if we could handle it financially. That's always got to be a consideration for a family. And also we decided that if I was going to have X number of hours to study that we would have to make sure to leave enough time for the three of us to spend together. So we go through, maybe once every three weeks, kind of planning what is coming up and who is going to be where and whether I'm going to have time for studying.*

Scott: *With my employer, there was no difficulties. I work for Alberta Government Telephones and they back very strongly anybody that takes any form of post-secondary education or any education whatsoever. And so that was looked upon in a favorable manner. As far as getting time off to write exams, again, there was no problem there whatsoever. As far as the family goes, that's a slightly different matter. Sometimes I would want to study and the family would want to go out so there would have to be some compromises made here and there. But, I didn't run into too many hitches.*

Ken: *I personally was not that concerned with that. My wife was very supportive of my furthering my education and she realized that there would be some time that I would need to myself for curses and studies and I think that the support that one's family gives them is important and as long as you have that support, it shouldn't affect the family operation at all.*

Ann: *Well, I make it fit in. That was my decision. I think you make the decision that either your family is going to fit in with your studies or your studies fit in with your family and having made the* *decision that the family was going to come first, the decision was made and the studies had to fit in around it. And, I didn't miss classes. You see with a regular program, when you have sick children or something going on, you may miss a week of classes and you've missed all those notes and sometimes it's very difficult to pick up. But this way you have it all there, so whenever you do have the time to make up what you've missed, you can do it.*

Interviewer: f2What keeps you going? What is the pressure for you?

Ann: *Pride. I'm not going to quite. And I want to do well.*

Colleen: *I guess I never thought of myself as a quitter. I had left high school in grade 11 for various circumstances at that time. And I always had in the back of my mind that I would go and complete my education and hopefully get a university degree. It became more important I think when I got involved in working in a law office, because there was the situation there where you're in a continual learning pattern for your job and I think that once I took the first course I became addicted! Some of my friends say "Well How long have you been doing that?" I say, "Well - 30 credits worth so far". "Well, how much more do you have to go?" "Only 60 credits left!" They say, :Well, when are you going to finish that?" I say, "Well, it's not when you're going to finish that, it's the fact that no matter what happens, even if I'm 85, I'm going to get a degree." So it's become now a challenge and I'll finish no matter what!*

Ken: *I figured once I made the decision to return to school and take courses it was a matter of disciplining myself to do it and to see it through. Once I did that then I found it no problem after that.*

Scott: *I thought it would be hard to do but I found out it wasn't. I think the enthusiasm over-ruled the difficulties and it was - ah - I just jumped in with two feet and went right at it hard and heavy initially and I think that maybe got me over the hump, so to speak. The courses were laid out in such a manner that I didn't find it difficult whatsoever starting up studying again. It was - everything was there. There was no holes. It was very easy. So now it is like a personal goal, you think "Well, I'm 40 per cent complete or 30 per cent complete There is light at the end of the tunnel." So that is the motivating force now. Plus the satisfaction of completing a course and just the general knowledge that you get from the course.*

Interviewer: *Would you have any particular advice for a prospective Athabasca University student?*

Ken: *The main thing for an individual in pursuing courses through Athabasca is to set a personal goal, a long-term goal as to whether they are looking toward a degree or whether it is personal interest courses. Then they have to look at developing discipline and motivation to meet that goal. If they are personal courses, of course, it's a lot easier if they are not working towards a degree and if they are just taking self-interest courses. If they are working on a degree program it's difficult to stay motivated for great lengths of time. It does take time to go through the whole degree program. It's not a structured program in a sense that you start in September and you end in May. Your time is your own and that is the hardest thing to deal with - to work all this stuff in while achieving a goal at a reasonable time frame for the future.*

Colleen: *Usually the biggest apprehension that people have about studying from a distance or by correspondence is that they are by themselves. And they really don't know if they have enough self-determination or whatever it takes to finish a course. That's their biggest concern. I think that the biggest feature that I've always talked about with the courses that I've taken and the university I go to is the fact that I can phone my tutor. I can phone Student Services. And I've always got help as close as the nearest telephone. I don't think too many people I know or talk to* *don't know I got to Athabasca. I guess I'm really proud of being a student. I'm proud of what I've done in the last three years, three and a half years. I guess I'm happy that I had the opportunity and I guess I'd like other people to know that that opportunity is available.*

Ann: *I think you need to have good reading and writing skills. You are not being spoon fed with the information. Beyond that, I think it's just the determination to see it through and not have to have someone prodding you; you have to do it yourself. However, you do it, if you organize your time as poorly as I do, or you organize it the way some people do, - they're putting in two or three hours every day, no matter what, in the long run it's on your own shoulders. Whether you quit or whether you carry on with it or do well, it's up to you. And you're far more independent and you're not competing with other people. Some people find it very tough to be in a class where everyone knows who is good and who isn't and who is doing well. They get very psyched out by the smart students and this sort of thing, whereas with Athabasca you don't know how the other people are doing. You never find out. It's just you and your material and you get the feedback from your tutor, you get the exam mark and the course mark, but you never know if you were at the top of the class, bottom of the class or what and that is good because if you're not a competitive sort of person you don't need that sort of competition. It's a good situation. I think it's healthy.*

Scott: *The most important thing is to have a good study area. Try to allocate some time where it's going to be fairly quiet. In other words, try to get the ideal set-up, to give yourself the edge when you are studying. Try to give yourself every advantage going. Be optimistic about it and you'll be successful at it. Go in with a positive state of mind.*

Narrator: *These experiences portray some of the joys and difficulties AU students have encountered. The rewards of finding that you can succeed as a university student are clearly great, but there are difficulties. Changing your lifestyle, coming to grips with self-disciplined study, and the self-doubts as you sit down to work. These must be recognized and resolved if the rewards of success are to follow. A number of issues have been mentioned by the students: getting support from family and friends, developing a schedule that works and juggling priorities. Also, there is often the need to overcome self-doubts, the feeling that you may fail and whether it is really worth all the effort. Students have overcome these problems in a variety of ways. Let's hear what their experiences have to tell us.*

Interviewer: “Probably a major difficulty that most of our students encounter is that not only do you have to set your own scheduling and learn on your own, but you do have to prod yourself. I think all of you have alluded to that at some time. And that self-discipline is really a definite requirement and I would be interested in hearing is that true, does it take some prodding and if so, how do you do it? What do you do? ”

Scott: *Well, in my own case, it's just a matter of complete immersion in the course. To get through the course very quickly. Almost cramming, to an extent. And that's how I found, at least in my own case if I were to go at it on a regular basis I'd have difficulty. I have to, on the courses every free moment that I have I apply to that course and I get through it very quickly and I find that I don't give myself a chance to think, "Oh well, I'll do it tomorrow or I can put it off". It's just forceful, I'm going to do it that's it, done. And then, find, if I want to take a break, I'll take a break at the end of the course. I won't take any breaks during the completion of the course. And that's the only thing on my mind at that particular time - you know for those few weeks - and it gets completed, it gets done. And I find that to be fairly successful.*

Interviewer: *Does anyone else use a different method?*

Colleen: *I find that by using a set schedule per credit that I can keep going. And I find it a lot easier with the three-credit courses. The six-credit courses give me a tremendous amount of difficulty for the fifth and sixth credit. But I keep to the credit a month schedule that I've established for myself and once I get through that sixth credit, take a deep breath. It's really nice to get a three credit course I know it's not going to take so long. So I use that kind of thing. I also use people around me to keep me going. People at work, Kurt and Wayne, friends. My dad is really good about it too, because he's always phoning and saying, "Well, are you done that one yet?". And that helps, too.*

Ken: *My case is slightly different. Again, everyone has different needs and objectives and personal goals. In my case, I do not have a set date or year that I want this by. I am taking it an my own speed. When it comes to individualized courses, I set my completion date for that course and then I work sporadically or in spurts within that period of time. The main thing is that I complete it by the date that I had set. Once in a while I find myself in a position of catch-up where I have to spend a few more hours in the day on it than I had planned and then that affects the family. But very seldom. Usually you know it has to be done and I space myself in such a way that I make sure that I meet the deadlines.*

Interviewer: *Scott, I know that you have taken a break recently and have been thinking about getting back to studies. I think that is the first break that you've had, but can you sort of tell us what kind of mental process you're using?*

Scott: *What, to get back into it?*

Interviewer: *Mm-hmm.*

Scott: *Just complete immersion, again. Lock yourself into a room until it starts coming back. And when you finally feel confident, you're back in the groove so to speak. But just attack! No schedule or anything, but when you get your free time, just go at it hard and fast and it will come back.*

Interviewer: *When you get discouraged, how do you avoid giving up?*

Colleen: *I always keep that in the back of my head and I think to myself I'm never going to give up. that end goal for me is what keeps me going and again I use people around me to raise my level of encouragement. I get really tired of reading a particular book, particularly when I don't really enjoy the subject and at that point I like to try and rush through to get it over with to go on to something that perhaps I enjoy a little bit more. I also use the softball as my Saturday break and in the winter time, curling. Just to get away and do something totally different. I usually can come back to it. There's usually so many people asking where I am at this point I don't dare quit now.*

Ann: *It also becomes so much a part of your life. I've taken courses now for six years and it's almost like a hobby. It's something you do whenever you get a free moment you go and read your books or start on a paper or something like this. Having come to the point now where I've completed my program, I'm feeling kind of lost. Come September and in the summer, it's okay because you're always busy doing other things, but I've been sort of thinking - well, what am I going to do in September? I've finished my courses. I'm going to have to enroll in another course. So, it becomes part of your pattern, pattern of living in a way.*

Narrator: *We hope these examples provide helpful background in your consideration of Athabasca University as an educational option.*

Music

Appendix G

Instructors Guide to the Orientation Workshop

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE
FOR
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENT SERVICES
ORIENTATION WORKSHOP

It's not the large things that
send a man to the
madhouse. . .
No, it's the continuing series of small tragedies
that send a man to the
madhouse. . .
not the death of his love
but a shoelace that snaps
with no time left. . .

Charles Bukowski
"the shoelace", 1972

Rosalyn Delehanty
Athabasca University

I: Introduction

"A Package of Shoelaces (And Some Guidelines for Lacing and Tying)", is an orientation program that emphasizes a preventative coping skills approach. For the student, the program aims to assist those, who are considering enrolling in a distance education university course, to adapt to the demands of student life. For the distance education institution, the program aims to decrease the incidence of student "non-starts", withdrawals, or, drop-outs.

The orientation program has been designed and is available to students through one of two service delivery methods: (a) by means of distance modes of communication (i.e., printed material, audio cassettes and the telephone); or, (b) by a face-to-face group workshop process.

The following Instructor's Manual has been designed for use with the face-to-face group workshop. It's aim is to provide for workshops leaders, a format for the presentation of orientation material. This format is intended to be a flexible guide that can be adapted to the local needs and characteristics of students from varying geographical regions.

II: Workshop Format: Overview

Goal: To assist students to adapt to the demands of student life by focusing on lifestyle changes, efficient studying and motivation.

Group Size: Unlimited

Time Required: Three-four hours.

Process:

Introduction
1. Warm-up
2. How the System Works
3. What You're Getting Into
    (a) Athabasca Student Characteristics
    (b) Adult Learners

The Shoelaces

4. Video presentation
    Self-Assessment
    (a) Experienced AU Students "Telling It Like It Is"
    (b) How do I compare?

5. Clarifying the Change in Lifestyle
    Assessment:
    (a) The week that used to be
    (b) The week that is to be

    Coping Skills:
    (a) Ask and it may be given
    (b) Give to get

6. Efficient studying
    Assessment and coping strategies:
    (a) Time
    (b) Place
    (c) Skills
    Resources:
    (a) Student Services
    (b) Appendix C
    (c) References

7. Self-maintenance of motivation
    Assessment:
    (a) Gaining awareness of internal dialogues
    Coping Skills:
    (a) Thought substitution
    (b) Relaxation

8. Concluding comments and workshop evaluation

III: Workshop Format: Steps

Introduction

1. Warm-up
    (a) People are given name tags and a brief questionnaire to fill

(b) Workshop facilitators introduce themselves with brief information about themselves.
(c) Participants introduce themselves and give reasons for considering AU or considering a particular course.
(d) Facilitators present the rationale for the orientation focus on self-management skills.

2. How the system works:
   (a) Lecturette about AU programs and resources available.
3. What You're Getting Into:
   (a) Lecturette on:
      (i) distance education
      (ii) adult learners
      (iii) A.U. student characteristics

The Shoelaces

4. Video presentation
   (a) Participants are asked to refer to the sheet entitled, "The AU Student - And Me" (see Section IV), and write down the characteristics mentioned in the film that: contribute to success; and, act as a barrier to success.
   (b) Participants then write on the sheet, characteristics for themselves that: contribute to success; and, act as a barrier to success.
   (c) Participants are divided into groups of approximately 5-6 people and asked to compare, discuss and add to their personal success/barrier characteristics.
   (d) Participants list these to the entire group and the facilitators write them on a flip-chart.
   (e) Facilitators lead a brief discussion on success/barrier characteristics.
5. Clarifying the change in lifestyle
   (a) Assessment: Exercise I: The Week that Used to Be (see Section IV)
   (b) Coping Skills: Exercise II Ask and it shall be given; demand and it shall be denied (see Section IV)
   (c) Facilitators lead a discussion on negotiation in communication, emphasizing:

- need for people to be heard
- need for people to be respected
- need for details in communication

6. Efficient Studying
   (a) Assessment and coping strategies: Lecturette on the factors of time, place and skills towards effective studying (see Section IV).
   (b) Lecturette on resources for further exploration (eg. references, student services, handouts).
7. Self-maintenance of motivation
   (a) Lecturette on semantic ecology; cleaning up what we say to ourselves, as well as, on environmental ecology, using the environment to work for us.
   (b) Exercise on coping skills: Thought substitution (see Section IV).
   (c) Exercise on the use of relaxation/visualization for creating a positive attitude (see Section IV).
8. Concluding comments
   (a) The facilitators lead a summary discussion reviewing the highlights of: lifestyle changes, efficient studying and motivation.
   (b) Participants complete a workshop evaluation.

IV: Workshop Format: Lecturettes and Activities

Introduction

1. Warm-up: A structured activity serving the purpose of "breaking the ice" or warm-up can be used in this section.
2. Reference to the Student Handbook and AU Calendar are used as resource material.
3. Reference to the appropriate pages in the AU Fact Book on student characteristics is used as a resource.

The Shoelaces

4. Participants are presented with the following sheet:

(see next page)

The AU Student - And Me

AU Students - Characteristics Aiding Success	Me - "Success" Characteristics

AU Students - Barriers Coped With	Me - Barriers I May Have to Cope With

How do you compare? On the right list the characteristics you feel will help you in being a successful student. Then list the difficulties that you anticipate may create some problems you will need to overcome.

5. Clarifying the change in lifestyle

(a) Exercise I: The Week That Used To Be:

Goals:

(a) To specify changes in life style demanded by becoming a student.

(b) To identify possible need for negotiating new ways of meeting expectations and responsibilities.

Group Size:

Any number of triads

Time Required:

Thirty minutes

Materials:

(a) Schedule planning chart
(b) Flip charts for each group
(c) Felt pens

Physical Setting:

Movable chairs and room large enough to accommodate triads.

Process:

I. Facilitator introduces activities and explains goals.

II. Facilitator explains nature of implicit contracts established with significant others, the dynamics of change in any one part of a system affecting every other part of the system, and the consequent need to examine and make explicit the change in balance that may occur with the demands of a new role.

III. Triads are formed.

IV. Participants are directed to fill out Schedule Planning Chart for last week. They are asked to note who was involved during out-of-work hour activities listed.

V. Participants then circle ten hours of time that could conceivable have been spent studying had they been active students that week.

VI. Each person then chooses one period chosen for study time that would otherwise have been spent with significant others

VII. Each person presents this problem period for reactions from the other members of the triad.

VIII. Each member of the triad presents a potential problematic situation and obtains responses from other group members.

IX. Each triad brings back to the entire group, a situation they feel may be a common problem situation.

X. Group provides ideas on how this situation could be handled effectively.

(b) Exercise II: Ask and it shall be given, demand and it shall be denied:

Goals:

-To learn to make assertive requests.

-The facilitators will roleplay assertive, aggressive, and non-assertive requests for time or shifting of responsibilities.

-Participants are to place themselves in the role of recipients of each request mode and answer the following rating Scale for each request modelled.

-Support Rating Scale

1. How do you feel about trying to answer the request positively?

Uncooperative ____1
____2
____3
____4
Cooperative ____5

2. How willing are you to give the proposed change a change--say for a few months?

Very willing ____1
____2
____3
____4
Very resistant ____5

3. To what extent do you feel confident that a further revision of your schedules can be worked out if the present proposal doesn't seem to be working out for

one of you.

Not confident at all ____1
____2
____3
____4
____5
Totally confident ____6

6. Efficient Studying
   (a) Lecturette on major goals to learning efficient study skills to include:
      (i) To be able to complete study in as little time as possible.
      (ii) To work with, rather than in association to, the way the brain works.
      (iii) Need for:
         (a) Schedule that works for you
         (b) Place to study free of distractions
   (b) Lecturette to include a reference list and list of services available from student services, especially in the areas of learning and study skills.

7. Self-maintenance of motivation
   (a) Lecturette to include concepts of semantic ecology and environmental ecology as well as the importance to motivation of self-talk and negative behavior.
   (b) Exercise III: Thought Substitution

Goals:
- to become aware of self-talk
- to learn to stop negative self-referent talk (irrational, ideas, dysfunctional myths)
- to learn to substitute positive for negative self-talk
- to recognize that to be in control of what you're doing, you must know what you're doing
- to make mole hills not mountains out of the task

Group Size:

Anywhere from three to five

Time Required:

Thirty minutes

Materials:

(a) Paper (flip charts)
(b) Pens
(c) Course package

Process:

I. Facilitator introduces idea how behavior is controlled by "internal dialogues" and idea of the necessity of becoming aware of self before change plans can be made.

II. Groups are then presented with a hefty course package and told to look it over.

III. Course materials are removed. Participants are asked to write on flip charts.

1) The self-talk they had engaged in when they started looking at course materials
2) The kinds of physical reactions they experienced

IV. Participants are then told to take several deep breaths and to examine the rationality of what they were saying to themselves.

V. Each group will then be given a pre-selected one week's work sample of the course previously examined. They are then to attend to negative self-talk, but consciously substitute positive statements.

VI. Facilitator discusses change process and need for self-awareness and practice in learning new coping skills.

(c) Relaxation

An experiential exercise, especially in the area of creative visualization is useful for this demonstration. One exercise that the authors have found to be impactful is a demonstration (with all participants being involved) of the reframing paradigm from neuro-linguistic programming.

8. Conclusion

(a) Lecturette and discussion summarizing the workshop with the facilitators stressing the positive elements (eg. skills, resources, techniques that contribute to success and a positive attitude).

This can be followed by a discussion period and informal "coffee" for participants to arrange, if they wish, study groups or exchange phone numbers.

(b) A brief evaluation should be conducted for feedback to the facilitators.

Appendix H

Home-Study Participant Evaluation Questionnaire

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENT ORIENTATION GUIDEBOOK EVALUATION

1. To what degree do you feel you have received each of the following benefits from this Guidebook?

(a) Increased awareness that will assist you in planning more effectively for returning to school.

____to a large extent
____to some extent
____very little

(b) Specific skills, approaches and techniques that you may want to consider applying.

____to a large extent
____to some extent
____very little

(c) New information which will be useful in planning for university.

____to a large extent
____to some extent
____very little

2. What new skills and/or new ideas did you learn in this Guidebook?

3. The Guidebook would be more effective if:

4. Major strengths and weaknesses of:

(a) Part I - the introduction to AU students and to adult students in general

(b) the audiotape "Telling It Like It Is"

(c) the section on the impact of changing your lifestyle

(d) the introduction of study skills as a possible concern

(e) the section on self-maintenance of motivation

5. The Guidebook has been:

   - excellent
   - good
   - fair
   - poor

   (please circle one) in meeting my current goals.

6. Would you recommend this Guidebook to a colleague or friend who was considering returning to school at Athabasca University?

7. Comments:

Thank you

Appendix I

Follow-Up Letter to Obtain Home-Study Evaluation Questionnaire

Athabasca University

Northern Regional Office

Serving students in the Edmonton area
and the university in Northern Alberta

Last fall you received a copy of our Orientation Guidebook. Because we are in the process of doing an evaluation of the Guidebook, your response to the Guidebook is very valuable to us. If you have not sent in the evaluation form on pages 27-29, we would appreciate your doing so at your earliest opportunity. If you have returned your evaluation form, we thank you.

Sincerely,

R Delehanty

Rosalyn Delehanty
Research/Evaluation

RD/vms

Appendix J

Workshop Participant Evaluation Questionnaire

ATHABASCA STUDENT ORIENTATION
WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Edmonton
Date:

1. To what degree do you feel you have recieved each of the following benefits from this workshop?

   A) Specific skills, approaches and techniques that you may want to consider applying.

   _____to a large extent _____to some extent _____very little

   B) Increased awareness that will assist you in planning more effectively for returning to shcool.

   _____to a large extent _____to some extent _____very little

   C) New information which will be useful in planning for university.

   _____to a large extent _____to some extent _____very little

2. What new skills and/or new ideas did you learn in this workshop?

3. The workshop would be more effective if:

4. Major strengths and weaknesses of:

   a) the introduction to AV students and to adult students in general

   b) the videotape "Telling It Like It Is"

   c) the material and discussion on the impact of changing your lifestyle

   d) the introduction of study skills as a possible concern

   e) the suggestion on techniques for self-maintenance of motivation

5. The workshop has been:

   - excellent
   - good
   - fair
   - poor

   (please circle one) in meeting my goals.

6. Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague or friend who was considering returning to school?

7. Comments:

Appendix K

Home-Study Participant Evaluation Summary

SUMMARY OF STUDENT ORIENTATION GUIDEBOOK EVALUATIONS

Fall, 1984

1. To what degree do you feel you have received each of the following benefits from this Guidebook?

   (a) Increased awareness that will assist you in planning more effectively for returning to school.

   _11_ to a large extent
   _14_ to some extent
   _ 0_ very little

   (b) Specific skills, approaches and techniques that you may want to consider applying.

   _10_ to a large extent
   _15_ to some extent
   _ 0_ very little

   (c) New information which will be useful in planning for university.

   _ 9_ to a large extent
   _14_ to some extent
   _ 2_ very little

2. What new skills and/or new ideas did you learn in this Guidebook?

   - I found your section on Techniques of Study (Appendix C) helpful, especially the sections dealing with reading, note taking and writing essays. The area dealing with self-talk was useful. If I can feel positive about the course, with hard work I will make it. The booklet on relaxation made me feel easier.

   - I find the whole idea of this guidebook was a positive approach in obtaining and reaching goals. I also found the guidebook to say if you believe in yourself then your goal is within reach.

   - Finding the time to be a student, father and an employee. A greater degree of self-motivation is required than I believed was necessary.

- Idea of substituting positive thoughts when negative ones start to take over. Physical exercises to relaxation. Giving more time or help to spouse in return for study time.

- Charting progress (after reading this book I have decided that a monthly chart would be very helpful to motivate study, such as the one below.

Hours 6
of 5
Study 4
3
2
1
1 2 3 4 5 6 --
Days of the month

- Reading skills - to read faster

- Making useful notes

- By sitting down and reviewing my weekly schedule I realized that I have not been utilizing my time to its utmost capacity. It is somewhat reassuring to realize my self-doubts are remarkably similar to many other students' but I think I basically had my fears and self-doubts under control by just pitching right into my course. Perhaps this book is not as effective with me due to the fact that I am largely independent and do not have to consider many factors when allotting my spare time.

- The new skills I found here are to study and how to apply yourself to the course you are taking. The ideas I've learned are how to plan your study time and how to relax.

- Up until receiving the guidebook, I was frightened of taking myself seriously - just taking one or two courses didn't seem enough to make me qualify as a student. I feel a bit differently now and feel that I will have more confidence in making the course(s) a priority in my life. I also appreciate the sections on "Techniques of Study" and "Stress Management Skills".

- I think just getting back to the basics of learning. One important thing I've learned to do is buy a desk or table to set up in my bedroom so I won't be distracted by t.v., my children etc. It has made me want to reach my goals even more.

- It gave me a better idea of how much time I will need to set aside each week to study, and also setting a time goal for completion of this course. It also reinforced the idea of positive thinking, to put self-doubt out of mind. I very much like the poem from Ecclesiasters on page 13. It is very appropriate and encouraging.

- Self-thinking and doubt - never realized the possibilities. Chapters 3 and 4 killed some enthusiasm, but pointed out that reality isn't so bad if you think realistically! Until forced to look at it, I didn't really think I had it in me; or know how many positive points I had by way of time, support or confidence.

- The Guidebook has been very instrumental in giving me a positive attitude towards studying. The ideas of approaching study, all the hurdles, self-doubt, motivating factors that need to be overcome in order to study successfully, have been clearly pointed out in the Guidebook. The idea of studying to achieve your own personal goal adapting your own study schedules or techniques to suit your own circumstances has been an idea I have learned from the Guidebook. I have also learned techniques of how to study and various ideas to help overcome stress from this Guidebook.

- Mainly the business of the importance of re-evaluating my free time; motivation and personal concerns. I'm quite glad for the detrimental points of university and your program that have been pointed out in the book and the tape.

- The idea isn't new but it helped to hear it from someone else who has lived through it. The idea I am referring to is that "I don't know if I can do this" and knowing that the students on the tape thought the same thing but succeeded anyway.

3. The Guidebook would be more effective if:

   - Send an actual shoelace with the materials. I hung a shoelace up as a reminder where I can come to if I have trouble with something. The guidebook gets me back on track.

- Personally I think you've said all that's possible to say. It doesn't need to be more effective from my point of view, because it's straightforward and gets right to the point..

- No need to change the approach used.

- I found the guidebook to be very informative and effective at this "stage of the game". Further comments either critical or praising this guidebook would be more practical as I get further into my studies.

- Presented as is.

- This is an outline only. As such, it has NO meat in it. Each section has one or two points that are interesting, but are so brief they leave me high and dry, feeling frustrated at the lack of detail.

- The guidebook is quite effective in its present form. You have already listed a number of references which we can turn to as other helpful alternatives.

- It was hard to relate to some of the ideas until I had actually begun my courses.

- I'm glad you put photos of Student Services staff and their profiles in this book. Because students don't have much face to face contact with staff and other students it's nice to see a face that goes with a name. Unfortunately this photo is on the back of this evaluation and will be returned to you. Perhaps using pictures of the students interviewed on the tape would make it all seem a little closer and personal. It would be great to have a picture of my tutor also. That would be better than just a profile and a voice on the phone.

- This guidebook is quite well formulated. Just because I did not draw any new material is of little consequence, for I consider myself more informed than the average individual.

- No suggestion to make at this point. It had been sent automatically with your receipt of my registration fee, as I had already begun my first course before I finally requested a Guidebook.

- It had brief examples and exercises in reading and note taking. It had self-evaluation questionnaire for returning to study. It had suggestions on how to communicate with tutors.

- I can't see how you could improve on the guidebook.

- It was made into a small starter course for people who have not completed high school and want a university education for a definite degree. I think it has been very helpful in every way!

- Nothing I can add, ask me when I've graduated.

- This is a hard question to try and give an answer to. Principally because from my own point of view I have found this Guidebook to be most effective in helping me to prepare for a university education, by pointing out just what is involved and giving guidelines that help you decide whether you have the self-discipline to study and the motivation to see it through. One suggestion that may make the Guidebook more effective is to get feedback from the tutors about their experiences with students and to identify the most common problems students encounter.

- Less assumptions were made about personal life-style (married, absence from or of schooling).

- Do you think one or two cartoons typical of an AU student's first look at the course material or their first conversation with their tutor would lighten the guidebook up a bit?

4. Major strengths and weaknesses of:

   (a) Part I - the introduction to AU students and to adult students in general.

   - Good. I know other people like myself are going through or have gone through what is ahead of me and succeeded.

- Very well written! Obviously much research was undertaken. The main thing was us as "students" being able to get down on our level.
- Well laid out, the method is to draw you into the group and identify.
- The insertion of phone numbers in guide was helpful. Saves you from going through phone book.
- OK
- It was interesting to note the average age 32. I suppose the high women enrollment has something to do with the present trend around women.
- Makes the assumption that one is highly motivated to take courses.
- Good, it's interesting to know who your peers are.
- The return to student life will present a different approach to an everyday schedule.
- Informative but limited.
- Lets you know the type and age of people who are students so that a person does not feel their situation is unique and may be foolish.
- Very complete.
- this is covered in the AU Calendar.
- Interesting to find I do not fit into the average category, but basically an "extra".
- I thought the statistics on Athabasca University students interesting - it's nice to know how you fit in with other students.
- Interesting statistics in Chapter 2.
- Mix of humour and fact makes effective reading, keeps up interest in a dull, but informative subject.
- No weaknesses, very simple, easy to understand and quite consistent with other AU materials.

- Major strengths: Good to know others are doing the same thing as I am. Statistics. the way it's put together and how its explained, and the opportunities open to the students. Major weakness: not much information as where and what specific occupations students are in and what are their personal goals with respect to obtaining a degree.

- Should include statistics on number of students and % of course completions.

- I can't see any weaknesses.

(b) the audiotape "Telling It Like It Is"

- Good idea! Not all speakers were distinguishable from the others. A small break between each of the students would make it easier tohear that it was a different person speaking.

- A little too long.

- Hearing actual students as opposed to tutors relaying their experiences.

- OK

- Opens a student mind to how other students feel about taking courses from Athabasca University and how they cope with external problems that affect their study.

- I almost didn't bother listening to it. I needn't have bothered.

- It's enlightening to hear from other adult students, their motivations, determination, family lives and the will to complete their courses regardless of time.

- Realization that other adults have some of the same problems. Not all the solutions will fit everybody.

- Gives you confidence because it lets you know that others have overcome the same doubts that you possess.

- It was very good to hear some of the ideas and problems/solutions of established students.

- The audiotape is a welcomed personal touch in the stock of written papers that draw in a new student. But all material was good.

- I feel the students explained quite well. They could have said what way they were going after, and what degree they were working on.

- It seemed a bit too general to me, to be really useful.

- Encouraging.

- Real and personal.

- Major strengths: Did put things in perspective for me. Made me feel part of a group instead of completely alone. Personal experiences. The tape gives a clear indication of what is required to embark on a university education and it outlines in detail, the self-discipline and motivation that is needed to succeed. The outside opinion given.

- Major weakness: Perhaps could have suggestions on how to win support of those who are skeptical. Was a little too long. I think there should have been a representative of the under-25 single university student telling how he/she coped. In production quality and lack of an attention holding structure.

(c) the section on the impact of changing your lifestyle

- I don't have a lot of the external pressures mentioned. I will have to tear myself away from the t.v. much more to meet my study requirements.

- To me this was the major section. I did not anticipate the changes which are required.

- Excellent

- OK

- A weekly timetable is a good idea to use to discover the place where study can be fitted in.

- This section helped me the most to set priorities and goals in both the course I am taking as well as other areas which I am involved in.
- This should be given to all students planning, especially full-time students, before they register.
- By establishing a workable schedule it wouldn't affect my lifestyle to any great extent as I have no immediate family - the guidelines are great.
- As I already teach I am always studying at work or home and it is already acceptable with my family.
- Makes you aware of possible problems so that if one comes up you are not taken unaware and can cope with it.
- not totally relevant. I find enquiring peers an added pressure.
- Good
- No major problems or changes
- Informative. It helped me realize I need to utilize my time more effectively.
- It's been explained very good about what can happen and how to cope with the problems that come up.
- This is the section which made me realize that my lifestyle should change because of my courses - I'm not just being selfish.
- A little scary, but an eye opener. Sobering but complete and needed.
- I found this section most helpful.
- It makes too many assumptions about ones lifestyle but does address concerns that one does not normally think of.

- Realistic - home study does "appear to be easy to fit into your schedule" but when it actually becomes a reality, it is more challenging than it first appeared.

- Major strengths: Made me realize that I was changing my whole way of life - not just picking up a few courses. Stresses need for some type of scheduling. This section points out the organization needed and the sacrifices required in order to become a successful student.

- Major weakness: Should stress further investigation in this area for those returning to studies. I have found them very helpful and worth every penny and much more. I think it may be more relevant to students in the over 25-age group who tend to have more responsibilities.

(d) the introduction of study skills as a possible concern

- It was a concern of mine. The appendix was helpful too.

- The need for a "mind set" was an imporant element.

- Excellent

- OK

- Appendix C gave me a better insight into the approach I should take to improving personal study skills.

- 67% of your students have had at least some university. This section is appropriately short.

- Just the envision of getting directly into study is a going concern to me at present; the guide is a definite asset.

- Finding a place to study can be a problem. This section gives excellent ideas.

- Left many options to explore and try.

- Good

- No major problems or changes.

- My study skills are really quite good but be assured I shall keep it for future reference.

- I found it very helpful the way you have put it together and explained it.

- Helpful because of concrete suggestions and the statement "A major accomplishment during your first course is simply learning to learn" was reassuring!

- Very good

- Practical, learning a new skills DOES require a great deal of conscious effort at first. But with time it becomes easier.

- Unavoidable, but also helpful "ability before commitment".

- This is just great. There's a lot of valid points made in this and the next section that, again, one wouldn't normally think of, but more than that, it offers solutions.

- This section is very helpful in that it shows that there is a way to get the best results from your study and learning how to study is a study of its own which is necessary because it stops you wasting time and enables you to get the best out of your studies.

- Major strengths: Gave some good hints.

- Major weakness: Not much detail.

(e) the section on self-maintenance of motivation

- It gets you thinking how negative one can be and gets you on the right track. Be positive! Very well written!

- The need to set goals and deadlines.

- Excellent.

- OK

- The aspect of positive thought and relaxation techniques is well done as these areas I have found most difficult while being fully employed.

- I was really interested in this section, but it didn't solve my problem, or even delve very deeply into it. It needs to be expanded. I'm sure there are other reasons for lack of self-maintenance of motivation.

- If you have the strength, the desire to make your accomplishment, that is really the motivation required.

- Good. I constantly have to give myself positive strokes to continue but do get frustrated when study time is replaced with something else because of my self-doubt or apathy. My biggest problem is always "At my age what good will it do me?"

- This section ties in with the audiotape to reinform a person's motivation to continue with their verbal plan.

- Should be a big help later on.

- Good

- No major problems or changes.

- Concentrated more on outside distractions where mine are inside, but it did relate other information on where to go for more info in that area.

- I found this very helpful for my life in general, not just as a new student.

- MOST IMPORTANT - positive attitude!

- Will help a lot.

- The "self talk" is very helpful.

- Major strengths: Gave some good ideas on positive thinking. Facing self defeating thoughts. Where you said about students and you paraphrased some examples.

- This section points out the need to stay motivated. It is very helpful in suggesting ways to keep interested and concentrate fully on the courses, by its techniques on positive thinking and the elimination of negative thoughts.

- Major weakness: very brief, none.

5. The Guidebook has been:

Excellent -	8
Good -	16
Fair -	0
Poor -	1

6. Would you recommend this Guidebook to a colleague or friend who was considering returning to school at Athabasca University?

- I would highly recommend this guidebook.

- yes

- Definitely

- Yes. The guidebook gives some helps and some pointers I found useful. It also warns of problems that may be encountered, such as marriage/relationship break-ups. It seems good that the book gives both suggestions for success and tells of problems that one may face too. Thank you.

- I would recommend and stress the study techniques to a colleague or friend since this is an area where a lot of individuals need assistance in formulating patterns and discipline for studying.

- Yes, and tell them to keep this page so they have a photo (see reverse side) of who they're talking to on the phone. It's a step to better and easier communication. I feel I know voices on the phone better if I can attach a face to them.

- Definitely, it has undoubtedly many pertinent ideas that would help any student entering any educational institution as well.

- Yes, as an introduction to getting back to study.

- Yes, especially if they are swinging back and forth and whether to return for a few more or a degree. It should help them decide.

- yes, I think anyone interested in going back to school (i.e. AU) should understand how this university works.

- Yes, I would give this book to anyone entering one of your programs.

- Yes (X3)

- Yes. It may not benefit every student a lot, but cannot fail to give at least some help to nearly everyone.

- Yes, I believe the basic concept helpful and the presentation very good.

- Yes

- Yes, I would.

- Yes, I would; it contains a lot of useful information and questions which are very important to answer - it's nice to have something which gives form to your thoughts when you're making a decision.

- Yes, definitely.

- Sure, it gives you a good idea of what is involved.

- Definitely.

- I would recommend this handbook. I found it to be a little reassuring, that yes I can do this.

- I would certainly recommend this guidebook to anyone contemplating returning to university. It points out the major difficulties and problems most students are likely to encounter. It gives excellent advice on organizing your studies and keeping yourself motivated. The Guidebook is structured in such a way that it informs you step by step about what you can expect from a university education and in turn what is expected from you in order to become a successful student.

- Yes, it does present many ways to solve possible problems, which does make a huge difference in the decision to enroll.

7. Comments

- Coming from the Maritimes this long distance studying is a new experience for me. I do hope someday that Athabasca will consider the Maritimes. I'm very impressed and I'm finding everyone so helpful.

- None. It does the job.

- The Magical Child Within does not appeal to me individually.

- This questionnaire has a problem - you don't have any idea of where the respondent is coming from. You have no way of knowing that I have an Honors B.Sc., that I'm taking only one course, for personal interest, or why I chose AU over U of A, U of C, or Red Deer College. These factors all affect my response to this guidebook. Just which fraction of your students are you most aiming this guidebook to? Also, you've printed this page on the reverse side of the only photo of your staff, including my tutor, that I've seen. It's a touch of human contact that I appreciate.

- I look forward with great anticipation to studying with Athabasca University. The staff has been very helpful and personable. Three cheers for your counsellors!

- Only comment is this readiness of returning to student life. If I'm really motivated enough at this time. It has been many years away from being a student, but I really believe that I will be able to build up all the motivation I'll need.

- One of the major problems I find with adult students I deal with is their approach to writing exams. Most remember how they approached them at school. A little word on this subject would also be effective in this guidebook to overcome doubts in this area.

- I felt that this handbook dealt very well with the problems without dwelling too much on the negative aspects. My initial attitude has been to "give it a shot, I've got nothing to lose". Now I have a more complete idea of the support available, and this book to supply fresh ideas to a tired mind; my attitude is much more positive.

- The most helpful part of this book is Appendix C. These suggestions/guidelines are excellent.

- I think these questions could be better answered later on rather than at the beginning of the first course.

- Thanks for the new ideas. It also makes me feel less like a "loner" knowing that other people have much the same problems and difficulties and also similar hopes and ambitions. It helped to make the whole thing less anonymous.

- I would like to comment on your own "self-doubts". The book is far from being a "total waste of time", it is very appropriate and very well written. Thanks for having it available.

- The book is a very useful guide to the student services at the university and is reassuring to someone who has always been a little intimidated by university, as I have.

- I found the guidebook very helpful to me. The way it was explained and the opportunities open. I didn't know about the libraries or the audio tapes. So I have found it quite interesting.

- The one thing that I would like to know more about is how the 9% who have not completed high school (like myself) are doing compared to the students who have graduated from high school. I realize it is such a small percentage that it probably doesn't make it significant enough to put in a general guidebook. So, all in all I think it is a very good starting step.

- An important first step.

- I think it was important to mention, as you have, that setting aside time to study involves not only you but your family and other responsibilities.

- I have found this guidebook to be very helpful in pointing out the realities of studying at a correspondence university. The guidebook helps you to identify many problems that you are likely to encounter as a student, and it suggests ways of overcoming these problems in order to get the most benefit out of studying. The guidebook has helped me in several ways, it has clearly pointed out just what an undertaking a university education is, it has indicated what is exactly required to be a successful student and helped me in deciding whether I have the ability to be a successful student. All in all it has been a very honest account of what being a university student means.

Appendix L

Workshop Participant Evaluation Summary

SUMMARY OF STUDENT ORIENTATION WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

September, October, November, 1984

Workshop Facilitator: Roz Delehanty

1. To what degree do you feel you have received each of the following benefits from the workshop?

   a) Specific skills, approaches and techniques that you may want to consider applying.

   - 31 - to a large extent
   - 16 - to some extent
   - 0 - very little

   b) Increased awareness that will assist you in planning more effectively for returning to school.

   - 26 - to a large extent
   - 21 - to some extent
   - 4 - very little

   c) New information which will be useful in planning for university.

   - 17 - to a large extent
   - 26 - to some extent
   - 4 - very little

1. What new skills and/or ideas did you learn in the workshop?

   - Advantages of a distance university. Study skills SQRRR.

   - Study/Reading techniques.

   - SQR3 study skills, relaxation skills, availability of Athabasca University resources.

   - Reading skills, support system, library usage.

   - I learned how to study more effectively. Also, how to handle my fears about being able to handle the material or situations which might arrive.

- How to manage time and to be flexible and what to expect from AU.
- How to approach my course. Study habits. Surrounding circumstances that need to be taken into account.
- SQRRR reading method.
- I learned more about being able to organize and apply myself.
- Good study habits. I appreciate the SQR3 method being explained. It gives me a good base to begin studying my course with, as I have been wondering how to start.
- Study Habit--approach to the task ahead. Comradry--some people have some problems with solutions to share with you. Services available through AU.
- Thanks for your time, patience, appealing personality and expertise.
- How to read lessons, SQRR.
- Time management, negative self-talk, for lack of motivation.
- Study skills and a better awareness of facilities at our disposal for particular areas (e.g. different workshops, etc.).
- Availability of total AU resources, study skills, memory reinforcing.
- Study skills, negative self-thoughts.
- Relaxation exercises.
- Refreshed my memory on SQR--I had completely forgotten this but perhaps to a great extent still using it. Needed reinforcing.
- How to study effectively, SQR3.
- How to avoid stress, how to study.
- I have learned new ideas about how to study.
- How to go about absorbing reading material.
- The reading technique SQR3, how to organize time better.

- Relaxation skills, study skills.
- SQRRR approach, sounds very good.
- SQR--and related ideas on actual study.
- Organization of time, how to study (SQRRR). Positive attitudes, rather than negative relaxation.
- How to study effectively, attitudes very important, reinforcing what you unconsciously didn't remember.
- Good presentation of books on studying English skills. Roz was honest, pleasant and interested in us as persons.
- I was impressed with the latter portion of the presentation, specifically study skills.
- Personal time management.
- SQR3--helped complete my study methods.
- Study skills, how to study.
- Study skills, memory skills.
- Study skills, scheduling skills.
- SQR3 techniques, advice about concentrating more on short-term rather than long-term goals. Video presentation re: use of tutors.
- The approach to the course in the sense of motivation and attitude.
- Time scheduling (importance of), my motivation, realized others are in same position as me.
- Self-motivation through understanding and controlling thought process.
- Study skills, ways to help me remember what I've read and studied.
- Re-enforcement of many ideas/skills I was already aware of.
- Study hints and motivation ideas.
- Reading techniques.

- Gave me more direction into what career I would like to choose, more ideas.

- Confirmation that I can do it.

3. The workshop would be more effective if:

- The heat was turned up.

- It was more individualized.

- More small frequent breaks in sitting at the table. More groups, fresh air.

- I thought it was very effective as is.

- I would have gotten 8 hours of sleep last night.

- It fulfilled the purpose already. Did not need more for my needs.

- I found it to be quite effective.

- Put into effect what suggestions have been put forth.

- More time should be spent on it--a full day.

- We could meet once a month.

- There had been two segments on the area of study mentioned in #2.

- More room or less people/instructor. Fresh air.

- More books on studying, English skills, references, an all day workshop would have been better, with a lunch hour break.

- I would have appreciated a more detailed rundown on the Athabasca University system. (e.g. specific job functions of personnel). The presentation overall was good.

- For me the workshop was effective.

- We could have more group sessions.

- Was excellent, there were more techniques involved for participants to do (the ones that are done are terrific).

- More emphasis was indicated in the area of student concern, i.e. students studying for a degree in Administration, be involved totally in an orientation workhsop concerning this topic.

- No comment.

4. Major strengths and weaknesses of:

a) the experiential exercises

- Through way of looking at the pluses, minuses of this university education as an adult.
- Recognition of some feelings/exercises.
- Good (x3).
- I found no major weakness, instructor most competent.
- Helped to put problems and strengths into perspective.

b) the introduction to AU students and to adult students in general

- I'm not sure what you are asking?
- Very good.
- Very informative.
- Glad that I came. I needed this boost and its definitely one more step closer to getting my show on the road.
- Did not touch much on younger people taking AU as an alternative to U of A.
- Ability to relate to other students.
- Independence, stress from families was very good.
- It was a very relaxed atmosphere with good participation.
- Positive intro.
- Strength, to develop cohesiveness.
- Show students may have different problems.

- Problems students are having.
- check previous page.
- Stongly suggest all new students or people considering enrolment attend.
- Excellent tool for introduction.
- Recognizing students different lifestyles and flexibility of study time. Fears of applying oneself to study.
- It's really good to know what type of people are taking these courses. I was wondering if I'm being realistic by doing this. Now I know I am.
- Really worthwhile.
- Finding out there are courses available to help.
- Major strength is to know that the service is available and availability of all the other services. Weakness was not many in class.
- Complete info of "Pros and Cons".
- Interesting but the general nature of the introduction leaves vague impressions.
- Isolated.
- Very similar.
- Very good.
- Good (x8).

b) the instructors:

- Very pleasant and knowledgeable.
- Very pleasant and knowledgeable.
- Very positive presentation, encouraging to new/old student.
- Good (x2).
- Excellent (x2).

- Comfortable, non-threatening.

c) The mini-lectures:

- Interesting. Things I felt I could apply to myself.
- Very informative - good advice and information.
- Good (x2).
- Excellent.
- N/A.

d) The material and discussion on the impact of changing your lifestyle:

- Yes, very good. Helps to explode some myths and adjust thinking.
- Quality material, need more discussion.
- Feels somewhat overwhelmed but I feel once I break the ice that things will start rolling positively.
- Little effect.
- Awareness.
- Was good as it encompassed all those present in one or more ways.
- Informative, although still difficult to follow.
- Was effective.
- For myself there will not be much impact but I found the discussion informative as to the changing of other persons lifestyles.
- Not too much at this time.
- A good idea, but I feel some people had thought of these problems or advantages below.
- The workshop makes students more aware of changes required.

- It gives the facts (very good).
- This part of the workshop was quite enlightening.
- Very good to get into groups.
- Good, I found I've had to change my priorities. I didn't think I could but it wasn't that difficult. Now I know I've done the right thing.
- Major strength.
- Good, but needs more.
- Helps to reaffirm own ideas.
- Comparison of ideas was good.
- Good, realistic, applicable.
- Interesting.
- Good (x7).

d) The Discussions:

- Good. We had a good, open group.
- Good (x2).
- Best part, meeting other students, their ideas.
- Share ideas, fears, problems - good.
- Excellent.

d) The Introduction of Study Skills as a Possible Concern:

- Again, very good.
- Interesting to see other approaches.
- Good intro, no weaknesses.
- Now I need to put it into effect.
- Good general introduction.
- New learning experience.

- Helpful and very useful in my situation.
- Good, something I can do with to a more greater degree.
- I could have used more of this segment.
- Helpful to a certain amount, more refresher course.
- This portion was good. A little more emphasis on this section though.
- Students who have not been in school for some time to have to learn study skills.
- Excellent!
- Good but limited to generalizations.
- Time, ought to be more effective.
- Informative. Good.
- Valuable.
- Very important to me -- my greatest concern.
- Gives a basic outline.
- This area of coverage was what I expected.
- Examples of flexibility.
- Good (x6).
- It's difficult to go back to studying after being away from it for so many years and with so many other things on your mind and schedule.
- Good, could be expanded.
- Strengthening what you may already have.
- Good, but may need more.

e) The video tape "Telling It Like It Is":

- Real life experiences.
- Allows "interaction" between new students and graduates, however, this is a one-way communication.

- Good, informative.
- Informative, dispells fears one has.
- Help me realize everyone feels as I do when just starting.
- Very informative.
- Real good. Regular people like myself wanting to improve.
- Good to hear of other successes. How they overcame obstacles.
- Good to listen to other students who have succeeded in their own goals and some of the problems they encountered.
- Good (x4).
- Well done. It makes one feel that others face the same obstacles as you in returning to school.
- Excellent (x4).
- Indicates other experiences of AU students. Gives you more examples of problems you may encounter as well as accomplishments you may make.
- Very good, cleared up many questions. Others feel the same as you.
- Hearing actual AU students experiences.
- Eases the tension among students.
- Should have a lot more, more people--make it a movie.
- Confirmation of my feelings of distance studies.
- Very worthwhile, gave the feeling that you were not the only one.
- Good, could relate to the problems discussed.
- Very beneficial to hear from students who have attended and overcome ordeal with same fears as I have.
- First hand report as to the effectiveness of the courses in relation to your lifestyle.
- Different views of what it was like, basically added up to same things.

- Very good.
- Generally good.
- A good way of showing how other students feel.
- Motivation, very good.
- Not bad, but first hand question/answer would be of more value.
- Makes you realize that other students are facing the same difficulties as you and how they deal with them.
- Positive impact about AU not enough comparing study to real life.
- Very informative.
- I found this very helpful.
- Again, an excellent tool for help with students who feel unconfident.
- Answers. Pertinent to fears and apprehensions of student.
- Very honest, nice to have an example of people succeeding and plugging away at it.
- Very good, it showed me that others have the same concerns as I do.
- Good, from students who have "run the race".
- Awareness of potentials, different points of view.

e) The Suggestion on Techniques for Self-Maintenance of Motivation:

- Group encounters may be better help.
- Good presentation, more group discussions.
- How bad do I want to do this is a question I really need to analyze.
- Very helpful
- Good techniques.

- Thinking positively - by thinking of positive experiences.
- Good, very helpful.
- Okay.
- Good. It is something essential for each one of us and each one has to develop or find the ones that work for these.
- Very good, rarity.
- Adequate.
- Could go into a little more, but certainly gives a person a taste so they know there are techniques available.
- Motivation, in my case, I don't find a problem.
- Good (x7).
- I think a strong discussion on motivation would be really helpful. Something really positive and exciting.
- Good but needs more.
- Good but again, this different for everyone.
- Helpful.
- Motivating and reassuring.
- Possibly could be more on this regarding realization of dreams or job situations.

5. The Workshop Has Been:

20	excellent
26	good
0	fair
0	poor
1	no response

in meeting my current goals.

6. Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague or friend who was considering returning to school (at Athabasca University)?

   - Yes, better than at the U of A adult workshops.
   - Definitely.
   - Absolutely.
   - Yes (x40) .
   - Yes - if it has been a long time since they have attended any schooling.
   - Yes - it establishes your connection with the AU that you are actually a student (the actual physical contact).
   - No response (x1).

7. Comments:

   - Presentation was very good and informative.
   - Possible personal (phone) contact initiated by Tutor instead of by student.
   - Enjoyed the workshop. Found the instructors were very helpful in their suggestions and answering questions.
   - I believe that the workshop has built up my determination to succeed in my courses I take.
   - Very personable atmosphere. Both counsellors very friendly and helpful.
   - Thanks for your time, patience, appealing personality and expertise.
   - Very well run and enjoyable.
   - Very helpful, I'm really glad I came. I will definitely recommend it to anyone else who is thinking of returning to school.
   - Beneficial experience, thank you.
   - The workshop was useful and encouraging.

- This was a good workshop. Ms. Roz Delehanty was a good speaker and presented this workshop in an excellent manner.

- Workshop was helpful - should have been all day so as to cover more ground. Rox was excellent!!!

- Instructor was very personable person, allowed people to talk freely re their problem without being worried about what is supposed to be talked. (Roz)

- Roz is an excellent person to converse with. She has a very definite way about relating to your concerns and is very willing to help inform you.

- Encouraging and helpful. Atmosphere excellent.

- Thus far, AU sounds like very good concept for higher learning.

- This workshop allowed me to meet other poeple with the same problems and to discuss these problems in an informal atmosphere. Make me more aware of the opportunities open to me via the U of Athabasca and also the problems that will arise if I decide on this mode of education.

- The workshop for me was good, but I feel that I will probably need to attend another on other skills/topics.

- The workshop should be longer, also time should be spent on all materials.

- I have learned to apply studying and communication skills more effectively, it tells me I'm not alone, sharing my feelings and experiences with other students.

- Very informative orientation.

- Excellent.

- Content very good and was presented very well with true concern. Good idea to give opportunity for new students to form support groups if they desire to discuss periodically with other students any problems they encounter and suggestions they can exchange with others.

- Thank you.

- Orientation to capabilities requested for course. Meeting of fellow students with same problems and concerns.

- I find it reassuring to be with other adult students. Working on my own time is great but I do like the contact with AU institution and students.

- The only thing I found did not meet what I would have liked is more discussion on enthusiasm and motivation.

- Enjoyed the instructor, she was very nice and easy to talk to.

- The workshop made me think more about myself and my goals so much so that I have a headache.

Appendix M

Expert Judge Questionnaire Cover Letter

Date 23 January, 1985

Memorandum

To

From

Subject Expert Judge Assessment of Student Need and Program Effectiveness

Thank you for agreeing to review the home-study orientation program. The perspective you bring to assessing student needs and effectiveness of a program to meet those needs is very valuable as part of a multi-faceted evaluation of the orientation programs currently being delivered by Student Services.

The evaluation in process is that of two relatively short-term orientation program. A comparison of course activity and of attitudes is being made of three groups of new admissions to Athabasca University in the fall of 1984. One group has attended orientation workshops at NRO, the second group has received a home-study orientation program (the one you will be reviewing), and a third (control) group has received niether program. The content of both the workshops and home-study programs are similar but the differences in the delivery mode presents a number of interesting questions regarding utilization and effectiveness. The "unpreparedness" and "lack of commitment" noted of AU students suggests the need for orientation. The geographical distribution of AU students demands that distance-delivered as well as face-to-face support services be available. Hence, the two programs and this evaluation.

If there are any questions regarding the attached questionnaires, please call me at 435-6546.

It is important that I receive your independent judgement on this questionnaire. Please do not consult with anyone prior to giving your responses.

Ros Delehanty

Rosalyn Delehanty

RD/vms

Appendix N

Expert Judge Questionnaire: Evaluation of Student Needs and of Goal Achievement

NAME: ______________________________

Position: ______________________________

Rating of: Workshop _____ Guidebook _____

EVALUATION OF NEEDS AND OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Expert Judge Questionnaire

Please indicate on the rating scales for each item:

1. How important this item is for incoming Athabasca University students to be aware of or to know.
2. How well you think this goal was achieved in the Orientation Workshop or Guidebook (with accompanying audio tape). Assume for the moment that the length of the workshop (4 hours) and guidebook (46 pages with 30-minute audio tape) are fixed as they are. Comments on expansion and/or reduction will be addressed later.

Please use the following rating scales for each of the two columns below.

	Degree of Need for Incoming AU Students					Effectiveness of Orientation Program in Fulfilling Need				
	Maximum priority, a desperate need	Great importance	Probably significant need	Possibly significant need	No good evidence of significant need	Excellent and comprehensive	Good and fairly comprehensive	Minimally acceptable	Weak - less than adequate	Negligible - essentially none
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
1. Knowledge of university resources available to assist students in achieving their educational goals (e.g. tutors, counsellors, coordinators, workshops, home-study reference material).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
2. Knowledge of Athabasca student characteristics (e.g. age, educational background, experience as AU students).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
3. Knowledge of adult student characteristics (e.g. self-doubt, time and role conflicts, learning potential).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
4. Knowledge of personal characteristics important for success as distance university student (e.g. self-discipline, good reading and writing skills, ability to plan appropriately).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
5. Knowledge of situational characteristics that are important for succeeding as a distance university student (e.g. support from family/friends, adequate study space and time).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
6. Awareness that planning with family and/or significant others may help avoid time and role conflicts.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
7. Awareness that efficient learning and study skills are useful and can be learned.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

	Degree of Need for Incoming AU Students					Effectiveness of Orientation Program in Pulfilling Need				
	Maximum priority, a desperate need	Great importance	Probably significant need	Possibly significant need	No good evidence of significant need	Excellent and comprehensive	Good and fairly comprehensive	Minimally acceptable	Weak - less than adequate	Negligible - essentially none
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
8. Awareness of some strategies for increasing learning and study skills	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
9. Awareness of resources available to assist students in improving their learning and study skills	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
10. Awareness of the need for self-maintenance of motivation in a self-paced mode of education.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
11. Awareness of strategies for increasing self-maintenance of motivation.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
12. Awareness of resources available to assist in improving one's skills in maintaining self-motivation.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

If you feel there are important results achieved by the program that are not identified in the list provided, please list them here.

If you feel there are important goals which should be addressed in an orientation program but which are omitted in this program, please list them here.

What would you consider the optimal length of an orientation program for incoming Athabasca University students?

Appendix O

Student Questionnaire Covering Letter

Dear Student:

We would like your help in planning our future!

Your experience as a new student at Athabasca University is of great interest to us as we plan new procedures and programs. In order to learn from your experience, we ask that you take just a few minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire. Your responses will help us to understand more about people who have demonstrated an interest in distance university courses.

We are interested in the responses of all students--whether you have already completed your course(s), whether you are somewhere in the process of finishing, or whether you have decided not to do any further work on your course(s).

Your responses on the enclosed questionnaire will be held in strict professional confidence and will be used only for this research/evaluation project. A self-enclosed stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

R. Delehanty
Research/Evaluation Co-ordinator

Enclosure

RD/amm

Appendix P

Student Questionnaire at Three Months Following Registration

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In how many courses are you currently registered? __________
2. Approximately how much time have you spent on your course(s) to date? __________
3. How many assignments have you turned in so far? __________
4. Have you taken an exam or quiz in your course? yes ____ no ____
5. Do you expect to finish the course(s) in the 6 or 12 month time period? yes ____ no ____
6. How often have you contacted your tutor? __________
7. How often has your tutor contacted you? __________
8. Have you had contact with a counsellor? yes ____ no ____
9. Have you had contact with the Athabasca University Library? yes ____ no ____
10. Have you had contact with a course coordinator? yes ____ no ____
11. How have you found Athabasca University in terms of the information and assistance available to incoming students?

__________ Has met all my requirements well
__________ Generally good
__________ Barely acceptable
__________ Some available, but incomplete
__________ Nothing worthwhile available

12. From what sources did you obtain information

__________ Calendar
__________ Friend
__________ Newspaper
__________ AU receptionist
__________ Registrar
__________ Counsellor
__________ Television
__________ Workshop
__________ Orientation Guidebook
__________ AU student
__________ Student Handbook
__________ Other ____________________

13. With the hindsight available to you at this point, how would you rate your awareness of the following items during the first month or two of registering in your course(s)?

	DEGREE OF AWARENESS				
	Excellent and comprehensive 5	Good and fairly comprehensive 4	Minimally acceptable 3	Weak-less than adequate 2	Negligible-essentially none 1
a) knowledge of university resources available to assist students in achieving their educational goals (e.g. tutors, counsellors, coordinators, workshops, home-study reference material)	5	4	3	2	1
b) knowledge of Athabasca student characteristics (e.g. age, educational background, experience as AU students)	5	4	3	2	1
c) knowledge of adult student characteristics (e.g. self-doubt, time and role conflicts, learning potentials)	5	4	3	2	1
d) knowledge of personal characteristics important for success as distance university student (e.g. self-discipline, good reading and writing skills, ability to plan appropriately)	5	4	3	2	1
e) knowledge of situational characteristics that are important for succeeding as a distance university student (e.g. support from family / friends, adequate study space and time)	5	4	3	2	1
f) awareness that planning with family and/or significant others may help avoid time and role conflicts	5	4	3	2	1
g) awareness that efficient learning and study skills are useful and can be learned	5	4	3	2	1
h) awareness of some strategies for increasing learning and study skills	5	4	3	2	1

i) awareness of resources available to assist students in improving their learning and study skills	5	4	3	2	1
j) awareness of the need for self-maintenance of motivation in a self-paced role of education	5	4	3	2	1
k) awareness of strategies for increasing self-maintenance of motivation	5	4	3	2	1
l) awareness of resources available to assist in improving one's skills in maintaining self-motivation	5	4	3	2	1

14. When you became an Athabasca student (or shortly thereafter) were you sufficiently informed about this system of education so you could plan appropriately? Check one.

Full data on all relevant factors ________
Fair data on all relevant factors ________
Some data on most important factors ________
Weak data on most important factors ________
Only speculation about most important factors ________

15. If orientation programs had been offered when you first registered at Athabasca University, which of the following would you have chosen?

________ An orientation workshop
________ A home-study orientation guidebook
________ Both of the above
________ None of the above

Appendix Q

Student Questionnaire Follow-Up Letter

Athabasca University

Northern Regional Office

Serving students in the Edmonton area
and the university in Northern Alberta

Dear

Recently you received a questionnaire asking about some of your initial impressions when you started your course-work with Athabasca University. While we understand that most of our students are very busy people and may be reluctant to add unnecessary tasks (like filling out questionnaires) to an already full schedule, we do need your feedback to assist us in planning programs which will help prospective students decide whether university distance education is a wise choice for them to make. Your experience regarding this is invaluable to us. While we are interested in the reaction of all students, we are especially anxious to hear from those of you whom the choice of an Athabasca University course was not appropriate - for whatever reasons.

We have enclosed another questionnaire in case your original one was misplaced. We would very much appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,

R. Delehanty

Rosalyn Delehanty
Counsellor and Research/Evaluation Coordinator

RD/jan

Encl.

10324-82 (Whyte) Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. T6E 1Z8
Telephone: (403) 432-1550

Appendix R

Five Month Follow-Up Interviewer Instructions

ORIENTATION EVALUATION INTERVIEW

Interview Instructions

Goals

1. To determine whether content of orientation program is relevant to student needs as demonstrated in an examination of their experiences in getting started as AU students.

2. To determine if there are needs that are not being met by AU - whether orientation or any other services or procedures used.

3. To determine whether there is any evidence that experience with an orientation program has been applied to their own experience in getting started.

Guidelines

Don't lead but probe sufficiently so that you can make a reasonable judgement about responses. You will not be able to do this on every item.

Do not correct misinformation, offer advice or make suggestions during the interview. Take an interested, receptive stance of an understanding but uninformed learner.

At completion of interview, go back to any issues you feel should be dealt with. Here, you are back to being an NRO counsellor.

It is preferable to take as few notes as possible during interview. (You may have to at points.) Form should be filled in as soon after interview as possible.

Make sure informed consent has been given.

At close of interview, allow time and be prepared to provide any further information requested.

Plan to begin the interview with the following statement (or a reasonable facsimile).

"Athabasca University is a different sort of university, different in a number of ways from what most people are familiar with. The differences of the University as well as the differences in being an adult returning to school make the anticipation and planning for a return to studying somewhat problematic. What we'd like to know is just what the experience of returning to school at AU has been like for you. Our mandate is to make a university education accessible to people - and we need to know more about how people are actually experiencing their initial period with AU."

Appendix S

Five Month Follow-Up Interview

Format

ORIENTATION EVALUATION INTERVIEW FORMAT

Introduction:

Athabasca University is a different sort of University - different in a number of ways from what most people are familiar with. The differences of the University as well as the differences involved in being an adult returning to school may make the anticipation and planning for a return to studying somewhat problematic. What we'd like to know is just what the experience of returning to school at AU has been like for you. The University's mandate is to make university education accessible to people - and to do that we need to know more about how people are actually experiencing their initial period with Athabasca University.

Interview Format

1. When you started your course, did you have enough information about this system of education so you could plan your studies appropriately?

   a) What sort of preparation did you have?

   b) How useful was this in your case?

2. With the hindsight of your experience to date, are there now any factors that you didn't fully realize - that you wish you had known or been prepared for?

3. From what sources have you obtained information about AU and about what it's like to be an adult distance university student?

4. What sources have you found most helpful to date?

5. What course(s) are you in?

a) How has it (have they) gone so far?

b) How much left?

c) Plans for continuing or finishing?

We'd like to know about some particular things that are sometimes of concern to adult students and distance students in other universities. Could you tell me what your experience has been like on some of these things?

INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

For each of the following questions, inquire further to elicit more information. (See suggestions below). An overall rating on the 5 point scale below should be made following that interview.

If "No", ask:
"How did you manage that?"
"How did you plan around that?"

If "Yes", ask:
"What has been your experience?"
"What did you try to do to resolve that?"
"How have you tried to handle that?"

SCALE

5 Very significant issue
4 Significant issue
3 Probably significant issue
2 Minor significance
1 No evidence of this being an issue

6. Finding enough time for studying?

5 4 3 2 1

7. Capacity to handle the kind of academic work involved?

5 4 3 2 1

8. Getting support from family/friends?

5 4 3 2 1

9. Ability to maintain your own motivation or self discipline?

5 4 3 2 1

10. Learning and study skills?

5 4 3 2 1

11. Have you had any contact with Athabasca University staff on any of these issues?

a) Have you felt the need for some help on any of these issues?

b) If so, how did, (or would) you go about getting assistance?

12. What had you expected to get out of your experience as an AU student (e.g. assessment of whether I could handle it, transfer credit, personal growth, better job prospects)? (Or, what were your main reasons for taking AU courses?)

a) How has it worked out for you?

13. How has your experience at AU affected your future educational plans?

    a) (If experience negative): Under what conditions would you try again?

14. Based on your experience, who would you suggest is a good candidate for this kind of education? Who would you suggest is not a good candidate?

15. From your perspective, how could AU better assist students like yourself?

Appendix T

Interview Analysis Form

NAME ______________________________

Interview Analysis Group ________

1. Initial information about AU system adequate?

5	4	3	2	1
very adequate		so-so		very inadequate

Comments ____

____

2. Anticipation of personal/work demands

5	4	3	2	1
exactly as anticipated		some unanticipated not major affect		major unanticipated events

Comments ____

____

3. Issues related to lack of course progress

Scale: 5 Very significant issue
4 Significant issue
3 Probably significant issue
2 Minor significance
1 No evidence of this being an issue

3a. Finding time for study	1	2	3	4	5
3b. Capacity to handle the kind of academic work involved	1	2	3	4	5
3c. Getting support from family/friends	1	2	3	4	5
3d. Ability to maintain motivation or self-discipline	1	2	3	4	5
3e. Study skills	1	2	3	4	5

Comments ______________________________________

____

4. Use of Au resources

a) Tutor contact
Regular __________
Occasional __________
Little or none __________

Comments ______________________________________

____

b) Counsellor Yes ______ No ______ Not known ________

Comments ______________________________________

____

5. Course progress

_____ a) Non-start (little or not effort even to start reading materials

b) Started but not completed
_____ Minimal
_____ Substantial

_____ c) Completed

_____ d) Suspension/extension taken

6. Effect of experience on future educational plans

_____ Plan to continue distance study
_____ Plan to continue at conventional university
_____ Plan to continue study at non-university level
_____ Plan to discontinue formal education
_____ Unknown

Comments ______________________________

____

7. What might AU have done that might have been helpful?

____

____

____

____

8. Descriptors used for:

Potentially good candidates for AU study

____

____

Potentially poor candidates for AU study

____

Appendix U

Case Histories

Non-Program Comparison Student Case Histories:
Interviewed at Five Months Following Course Registration

Case#1:

Not complete - expects complete. Has BA, will get promotion with educational upgrading. Tutor contact useful in stimulating progress. Has used contact to keep motivation going. May continue with AU.

Case #2:

Complete. Getting professional qualifications. Coursework has gone all right. Felt uninformed on matters other than course. Has had difficulty getting family support and was unaware of methods to improve study skills. Also taking U of A courses. Will continue in one or other or both.

Case #3:

Not complete. Wanted to upgrade own knowledge and check out whether exam anxiety had diminished over time. Found that it hadn't. Found tutor contact and seminar with other students highly desirable. Not comfortable with tutor in second course--doubts she will work on course or will change tutor.

Case #4:

Non-start. Registered without clear consideration of goals. Had barely looked at materials. Doesn't feel tutor is approachable. Feels she needs better time-management skills and knows Student Services help was available but has not felt like making contact. Friends also willing to help but has not used them either. Feels AU should insist that each new student have, at minimum, an interview with someone who outlines what the expectations of students are at AU.

Case #5:

Complete. Working toward B.Sc. Has strong support system with colleagues at work. Had taken Simon Fraser distance courses and expected AU to be like them. Very well organized. Has a very systematic approach to study, setting schedules and rewarding self. Family priorities are an occasional problem but handles them. No indication that there has been a need for other than course related help. Will continue at AU.

Case #6:

Non-start. Casual approach. Likes idea of being accomplished person. Upheaval in personal life blamed for lack of course progress. Sees self as competent student, recently in formal education. Positive about AU, tutor system good, course materials good. Does not see himself as person needing help. May try AU again.

Case #7:

Non-start. Shift work interfers with tutor contact. Was unprepared for AU system when she started. Could especially have used help on time management. Personal contact other than tutor would also have helped. Saw counsellor - got answer to specific transfer question but more info would have been useful. Course material useful even if credit not obtained. May take another course after quitting work and having baby.

Home-Study Participant Case Histories:
Interviewed at Five Months Following Course Registration

Case #8:

Complete. Trying to increase career potential. Working out O.K. Had some limited information. Talked with no one but "had tapes you sent around. It's got everything you need in it. If you know what you want, you can work things out." Will continue at AU.

Case #9:

Start but not complete. Has degree, now a housewife. Wanted intellectual stimulation. Hadn't realized how time consuming house building and 2nd baby would be. Course good, problems are personal. Services of counsellor and tutor good. Interesting to hear other student perceptions on tape. Knows counselling services available. Choose not to use them.

Case #10:

Not complete. Advancing career. Feels distance education not the best system for him but the only one possible. Enjoys freedom and lack of external pressure but also feels it is hard to handle. Was informed about system. Finding some lack of family support. Would like more tutor contact.

Case #11:

Not complete. Hazy about goals. Well informed about AU system. Feels own lack of motivation and discipline are problems but indicates no concern about changing - "That's the way I am". Has recommended AU to a relative who he thinks has what it takes for distance education system.

Case #12:

Not complete. Upgrading education. Threat of job loss and unexpected time requirements of course reasons for slow progress.

Enjoys course, tutor very good. Likes system but feels it's harder. "You are your own teacher." Can't depend on teacher or classmates for clarification.

Case#13:

Not complete. Expects to complete. Part of CGA program. Feels progress going alright but slower than he hoped. Well aware of needs to set priorities, schedule, to develop ways to motivate himself. Has good support from spouse. Plans to continue with AU.

Case#15:

Non-start (read 1st chapter). Started new job, child took other priority time. Aware of system - sister took course. Obtained Orientation Guidebook - "helpful". Tutor contact aroused guilt - but no work. Feels it was up to her. Considers it a loss of money - but sees lack of course progress as due to external circumstances.

Case#16:

Not complete. Part of CIM program. Job change - more responsibility. Sees herself as highly motivated and organized but sees personal contact at AU as missing - someone who cares about your progress. Contact with counsellor inadequate - did not provide with enough information. No mention or indication that Guidebook used.

Workshop Participant Case Histories:
Interviewed at Five Months Following Course Registration

Case#17:

Non-start. Decided she needed classroom instruction. Found course "too abstract" to do on her own. Information and introduction to AU good. Nothing more needed from AU. Feels she needed to try distance education to see if it was O.K. for her. Decided it wasn't. Will plan on going to U of A.

Case#17:

Not complete. Had enough information and preparation but didn't manage time well enough. Saw counsellor and attended Orientation Workshop. Was impressed with people and how workshop was put on. It was useful in getting started. "I was able to dive right in".

Long time-lines became a problem - "I felt like I didn't have to push myself." Hadn't decided on future education. Wanted to try this system and doesn't feel "like I've really finished the experiment yet".

Case#19:

Not complete. Uncertain whether course will be completed. Was committed and prepared. Orientation dealt with many things - including budgeting of time. Feels it should be pre-requisite to registration. Well aware of time-management and study skills - but unprecedented work load plus failure to practice what he knew about time scheduling interfered with course progress. Recent move to city and to new job involved. Tutor very helpful. "Distance education should work for me". Will continue with it.

Case#20:

Not complete. Not concerned with credit. Used AU course as means of assessing whether a return to university education would work. Previous negative experience and high personal expectation meant a return to school was seen as a high risk situation. Orientation very helpful, reassuring. Learned how to talk to himself, remind himself of his goals. Study skills also very helpful. Staff very supportive. Did not feel isolated as he had expected. But still would probably not seek counselling assistance. Felt he should be able to help himself. As a result of experience he felt more confident, reassured that he has resources within himself to tackle full time enrollment at U of A.

Case#21:

Did not register. Used workshops (orientation, career planning, job search) to assess whether to register at AU. Helped reorganize his plans. "Probably the biggest thing has been that it helped me feel good about planning a return to school - not afraid or inhibited". Plans to start with AU when time is right and continue on to U of A for long term plans.

Case#22:

Complete. Have taken course for personal growth, enjoy learning. Find system excellent. "I enjoy being with you guys. You're colleagues. Orientation seminar good. Although I felt I have some reasonably good skills--e.g. study and time management - it helped me focus on essentials. But the great thing was meeting other AU students. They're great people. I really felt comfortable with them."

Case#23:

Complete. Opportunity to learn - not related to work or any external goals. "A haven" - from real life, exciting. Workshop, counsellors, tutors have all been excellent. Had basic self-discipline skills - gained most from developing an attitude change. Learned to cope with stress and focus on my own goals. Will continue at AU.